

A N
E S S A Y
O N
I N S P I R A T I O N :

CONSIDERED CHIEFLY WITH RESPECT TO THE

E V A N G E L I S T S.

By GILBERT WAKEFIELD, B.A.
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Classical Tutor at WARRINGTON.

Της κατα αληθειαν ευσεβεις και φιλοσοφης τιμαν και
τεργειν ο λογος υπαγορευει, παρανταμενοι δοξαις παλαιων
εξαπολαθειν, αν φανλοι ωσιν.

JUST. MART. Ap. I.

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MDCCLXXXI.



TO THE
LOVER OF THE GOSPEL

AND THE FRIEND OF

MENTAL LIBERTY,

(CHARACTERS, THAT ARE INSEPARABLE!)

OF WHATEVER

COUNTRY, SECT, OR DENOMINATION:

AND PARTICULARLY,

TO THE LIBERAL MEMBERS

OF OUR OWN ESTABLISHMENT,

THE MOST TOLERANT AND ENLIGHTENED

CHURCH IN CHRISTENDOM:

THE FOLLOWING

T R E A T I S E

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P R E F A C E.

THE Author of this little Essay was not apprised of LE CLERC's Letters on Inspiration, before he had modelled and almost completed his own Performance. On reading those Letters, he found, indeed, some of his Observations anticipated by that liberal and learned Writer; but saw no Reason to think his own Attempt, which professes to enter into a more free, comprehensive, and circumstantial Discussion of the Subject, in any Wise superseded.

The Temper of the present Generation, so much occupied as they are in the Pursuit and Enjoyment of worldly Things, promises but little Encouragement to the

Publication of any Work, that respects THEOLOGY. To gratify the Sense with the various Fooleries of theatrical Exhibitions, is now one great Object of the public Attention: a sure Symptom this, of the Decay of Literature and Virtue, and of the Prevalence of an effeminate and a depraved Taste! The learned themselves are mostly engaged in political Disquisitions, or in pushing their Researches into the unexplored Regions of natural Philosophy: Researches, worthy of every Effort of cultivated Genius, and the Dignity of the human Mind: it is only to be lamented, that they should predominate, to the Prejudice of other Pursuits of no less Dignity and Usefulness than they.—Even the Generality of our own Profession, “the Ministers of heavenly Things,” who have entered into a formal and most solemn Engagement, to be diligent in reading the WORD of GOD, and in prosecuting those Studies which subserve to the Illustration of it, that

that they may be enabled to instruct others therein—are not solicitous to instruct themselves. They are infected by the distempered Manners of the World around them; and, in this State of Sickliness and Stupefaction, seem to forget “ what Manner of Men they are.” That Stock of useful Knowledge, which was planted at School and matured at the University, is suffered to run waste, and brings no Fruit unto Perfection. They issue forth, completely equipped for the Battle; but decline the Contest, and sit down for Life, ignominious and contented.*

ΤΟΝ ῥ' ἦΤΟΙ ΜΕΝ ΕΠΕΜΠΕ ΣΥΝ ἸΠΠΟΙΣΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΟΧΕΣΦΙΝ
Εἰς ΠΟΛΕΜΟΝ, ὃν Αὐτὸς ΕἰΔΕΞΑΤΟ ΝΟΣΗΣΑΝΤΑ.

*But, though the Ardour of FREE EN-
QUIRY in religious Subjects is so much*

* *With what Face can they read that pointed Exposition of the APOSTLE :*

Ο ΔΙΔΑΣΚΩΝ ἑΤΕΡΟΝ, ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ & ΔΙΔΑΣΚΕΙς ; Rom. ii. 21.

“ OUT of thine own Mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked Servant ! ”

abated among the Clergy, and an ignoble Acquiescence in the Decisions of our Forefathers so industriously recommended, even by those, from whose Principles as PROTESTANTS, from whose EMINENT STATIONS in the Church, and from whose INTELLECTUAL ATTAINMENTS we might have expected more CONSISTENCY, more ZEAL for the Advancement of the TRUTH, and more GENEROUS and ENLARGED CONCEPTIONS—notwithstanding these and other Discouragements, we will not suffer a peevish Disgust at the Inconsideration or the Profligacy of the present Times, to intercept those Labours, which, we apprehend, will prove acceptable to the CHOSEN FEW*

* *Vel quia nil rectum, nisi quod placuit sibi, ducunt;
Vel quia turpe putant parere minoribus, et quæ
Imberbi didicere, senes perdenda fateri.*

HOR.

*Who scorn a Lad should teach his Father skill,
And, having once been wrong, will be so still.*

POPE.

of

P R E F A C E. ix

of our own Day, and may possibly be of some Service in enlightening the Minds and dilating the Hearts of our Posterity, by furnishing right Notions of CHRISTIAN TRUTH and CHRISTIAN LIBERTY. We owe this Acknowledgement at least to the GRACIOUS BEING, who has blessed us with the Gift of Understanding, and with all the delicate and retired Gratifications, arising from the Improvement of it. We will, therefore, proceed and persevere in this commendable Employment, "through Honour and Dishonour, through evil Report and good Report," unterrified and unseduced; nor repine, if we leave to others the Profit of our Lucubrations. Like the generous Husbandman, we will plant and dress the Tree, which reserves it's Shade for future Generations.*

* Jam, quæ seminibus jactis se sustulit arbos,
Tarda venit, seris factura nepotibus umbram.

VIRG. Geo. II. 57.

ONE Class of Readers will, no Doubt, be grievously offended at the Freedom with which I have expressed myself on certain Points of Doctrine, that have been long established by legal Authority, and are therefore preposterously denominated and reputed ORTHODOX. But I must not carry my Complaisance so far, as to accommodate, at the Expence of Truth, either my Faith or Writings to the interested Views and transient Policy of “the Kingdoms of this World.” I hold the PRIVILEGES of NATURE and CHRISTIANITY in too high an Estimation, to make a mean Surrender of them to any Authority, ecclesiastical or civil, that presumes to usurp a Tyranny over the Mind and Conscience, and to invade the PREROGATIVE of HEAVEN*. I have, on this Account, delivered my Sentiments upon some received Opinions, which I cannot but consider as IMPIOUS and ANTICHRISTIAN, with Energy and

* Matt. xxiii. 8—11. Rom. xiv. 4—14.

Indignation. I esteem it to be the Duty of every Person, as he values the true Interests of Religion, and his own, to proclaim the Truth with Simplicity and Firmness, as in Subjection to the LORD and not to Man, after the Example of the APOSTLES and first Preachers of the GOSPEL; who were inclined to think "it impossible" for an upright and zealous Christian, "not to speak the Things" which he confidently believes to be "true, and profitable unto Men."*

I might also reasonably defend myself from alledging the Inefficacy of a time-serving and timid Spirit, which is often interpreted (and perversely enough) into a Symptom of Imbecility, as implying some Defect, either of an Author's Arguments, or his Conviction.—Besides, if UTILITY be our Object, and not the Establishment of unfruitful Speculations; what Reformation

* Acts iv. 13—22.

was ever yet accomplished, but by an open and fearless Opposition?

To exemplify the Justness of this last Position, I need only mention the Names of LUTHER and ERASMUS. These great Men entertained, probably, much the same Sentiments upon the essential Doctrines and Duties of Christianity, and were alike convinced of the Corruptions of the PAPAL SEE. The one conducted himself with a timid Circumspection, with a temporising, conciliating Accommodation of Manners to the Circumstances of the Times, and the "Powers that were," which bordered upon Prevarication and Insincerity: the other spake and acted, with Firmness and Decision. The one, by the feeble Efforts of Irony and Remonstrance, exasperated without Effect: the other, by Invective and Intrepidity, achieved a signal Revolution in the Christian Church, and restored to Mankind the LIGHT and LIBERTY of the GOSPEL.

To

P R E F A C E. xiii

To the Majority—who, I dare say, will not scruple to stigmatise me with some of those Names of odious Distinction, Arian, Socinian, and such Sort of legitimate Abuse—I shall not condescend to make any Apology—None is necessary—Their Opinion I despise, and will not deprecate the utmost Severity of their Resentment.*

Others, perhaps, who may know me personally, will be of Opinion, that I have committed a most culpable Indiscretion, and have incurred the Imputation of Conceit and Arrogance, in publishing my Thoughts on such an important Subject, as that discussed in the following Essay; a Subject, that required a confirmed Maturity of Judgement, and the most extensive Information:—that Notions, so peculiar in themselves, and so abhorrent to the general

* Φευγε μάλ', εἰ τοι θυμὸς ἐπέστυται· ὅδε σ' ἐγώ γε
 Λίσσομαι, εἵνεκ' ἐμεῖο μένειν· παρ' ἐμοί γε καὶ ἄλλοι
 Οἱ κέ με τιμῶσι —

HOM. II. I. 173.

Persuasion of Men, from the earliest Periods of the Christian Æra to the present Times, should not have been obtruded on the Public, with so little Diffidence and Reservation, unsanctified by the Authority of Experience and Age. The Objection carries with it, I confess, an Appearance of Reason: nor can I make a minute Reply, without a manifest Violation of Decorum. Let me be permitted, however, to appeal from such fastidious Exceptions, to the superior Judiciary of a very excellent and celebrated Author.*

“MANY leave the Labour of Half their Life to their Executors and to Chance, because they will not send them abroad unfinished: and are unable to finish them, having prescribed to themselves such a Degree of Exactness as human Diligence scarcely can attain. Lloyd, says Burnet, did not lay out his Learning with the same Diligence as he

* Idler, No. 65.

laid it in. He was always hesitating and inquiring, raising Objections and removing them, and waiting for clearer Light and fuller Discovery. *Baker*, after many Years past in Biography, left his Manuscripts to be buried in a Library, because that was imperfect which could never be perfected.

“OF these learned Men, let those who aspire to the same Praise, imitate the Diligence, and avoid the Scrupulosity. Let it be always remembered, that Life is short, that Knowledge is endless, and that many Doubts deserve not to be cleared. Let those whom Nature and Study have qualified to teach Mankind, tell us what they have learned, while they are yet able to tell it, and trust their Reputation only to themselves.”

ERRATUM.

Page 11, the last Line, for Dr. Bigot read Dr. Bagot.

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A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE

FIRST EPISTLE of PAUL the APOSTLE
to the THESSALONIANS:

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S P E C I M E N

11 AP 66
OF AN INTENDED VERSION OF THE WHOLE

N E W T E S T A M E N T.

A N
E S S A Y
O N
I N S P I R A T I O N.

SECTION I.

The Introduction—General View of the
CORRUPTIONS of CHRISTIANITY—
The Importance of FREE INQUIRY—
The Doctrine of INSPIRATION.

Η ΘΑΥΜΑΤΑ ΠΟΛΛΑ,
ΚΑΙ ΠΟΤ ΤΙ ΚΑΙ ΒΡΟΤΩΝ ΦΡΕΝΑΣ,
ΥΠΕΡ ΤΟΝ ΑΛΗΘΗ ΛΟΓΟΝ,
ΔΕΔΑΙΔΑΛΜΕΝΟΙ ΨΕΥΔΕΣΙ ΠΟΙΚΙΛΟΙΣ
ΕΞΑΠΑΤΩΝΤΙ ΜΥΘΟΙ.

PIND.

THE Truths of Christianity,
during the Life of their great
DISPENSER, made but slow
Advances in superseding the Errors and

B

in

in reforming the Corruptions of Mankind. The SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, that he might finish his Career of Sufferings unmolested, and win, rather than controul, the Affections of the human Heart, displayed with Reserve the Glories of his Wisdom and Power, to an inconsiderable Number of the Inhabitants of a small Portion of the Globe. But this Religion, when invigorated by the concurrent and decisive Evidence of his MIRACLES, his DOCTRINE, LIFE, DEATH and RESURRECTION, and above all, by the SUPERNATURAL POWERS communicated to the APOSTLES after his ASCENSION, for the Vindication of his Character and the Establishment of his Pretensions, began to spread with accelerated Rapidity through the civilized Nations of the Earth. In few Years after the Promulgation of the Gospel, the active and unwearied Zeal of it's Professors had extended the Limits of the

the Church into many and distant Regions, and had gained numerous Converts, even among the inquisitive and enlightened Inhabitants of GREECE and ROME. Nor could the stubborn PRIDE, the national MALIGNITY, and the hereditary PREJUDICES of the JEWS, those grand Impediments to a GENERAL Conversion of that devoted Race! entirely withstand the Influence of the WONDERFUL ACHIEVEMENTS, the simple and commanding ELOQUENCE, the unconquerable FIRMNESS, and the BLAMELESS LIVES of the primitive Disciples. Many thousand Profelytes*, even in the very Bosom of JERUSALEM, found themselves unable to encounter or to resist the Wisdom and the Spirit of a few unlettered *Galileans*, and yielded up their Prejudices and

* SEE Acts ii. 41. v. 14. xxi. 20. ΜΤΡΙΑΔΕΣ
Ιεραίων των πεπιστευμένων.

4 AN ESSAY ON

Passions to the predominant Authority
of TRUTH and INNOCENCE.

THUS was the CHRISTIAN CHURCH composed of a great Variety of Members collected from every Nation under the Roman Power, of Characters infinitely diversified by discordant Opinions, Customs, Passions, Principles and Educations. JUDAISING ZEALOTS, habituated from their Infancy to the gorgeous Solemnities of a ceremonial Worship, and blindly devoted to the traditionary Superstitions of their Fathers: JEWISH SECTARIES, discriminated and divided by a zealous Attachment to their respective Systems: PROSELYTES OF THE GATE, disclaiming the Obligations of the Mosaic Ritual: GENTILE PHILOSOPHERS and WRANGLING SOPHISTS, completely versed in metaphysical Subtilties and every Artifice of logical Debate: GNOSTIC VISIONARIES, bewildered in the
Mysteries

Mysteries of Mythology and allegorical Conceits : THESE AND OTHERS, of various Denominations, with all their Singularities and Antipathies, national and acquired, pressed together into the Community of Christians, united in Nothing but a NAME, and unanimous only in the Acknowledgement of ONE GOD THE FATHER, and ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST. What Wonder, if such a sudden Influx of adventitious Streams soon polluted the pure Sources of Christianity and the Scriptures !

THE most perfect Institutions, either of divine Wisdom, or of human Prudence, may be soon debased by the Interference of Perversity or Conceit. Nor was THE GOSPEL exempt from the common Fatality of terrestrial Things, after it was at length consigned by Providence to the Hands of a degenerate Race of Beings. Immediately

6 A N E S S A Y O N

on the Death of the Apostles*, and even before that Period, a Multiplicity of Heresies, the rank Offspring of MIS-TAKEN PIETY, UNHOLY ZEAL, and IMAGINARY SCIENCE, infested the Christian Church. The Faith of JESUS lost in a short Time it's Beauty and Consistence, by an Incorporation with a Variety of irrational and airy Theories: and the pacific Wisdom of the Gospel was made to administer, by a strange and deplorable Perversion, to Animosity and the inexorable Rage of Disputation. *The Tares* scattered by the watchful *Enemy*, whilst the *Husbandmen* were asleep, soon propagated with a mischievous Luxuriance, and retarded the Growth of *the good Seed*, which our Lord had sown,

*Επι τούτοις (Αποστολοις) παρθεν καθαρά και αδιαφθορα εμεινεν η Εκκλησια—ως δε ο ιερ των Αποστολων χορο διαφορον ειληφει τς βιβ τελη-τηνικαυτα της αθεσ πλανης την αρχην ελαμβανεν η συγαλις, δια της των ετεροδιδασκαλων απαιτης.

HEGESIPPUS apud EUSEB. Ec. Hist. L. III. C. 32.

and

and his Apostles watered, with a thick and chilling shade. The metaphysical Disquisitions and verbal Strifes of scholastic Theologians, the Accumulation of idle Ceremonies to captivate the gross Sensations of the Vulgar, a ferocious Spirit of Persecution, and unceasing Struggles for ecclesiastical Dominion, productive of endless Schisms and implacable Resentment, in the earliest Ages of Christianity; the Oppressions of Ignorance, and the Usurpations of Papal Despotism in the later Periods, together with the Substitution of bodily Austerities, pecuniary Commutations, and numbered Prayers, for RATIONAL AND SOLID PIETY, for UNIVERSAL RIGHTEOUSNESS, and PURITY OF HEART; these combined Causes operated with such Malignity and Success to the Prejudice of the Christian Revelation, as almost to efface every Vestige of this best Gift of Hea-

8 AN ESSAY ON

ven to disconsolate Mankind*. These enormous Effects of VICE and SUPERSTITION, which are delineated by the Hand of History as characteristic Features in the Portraiture of these horrid Times, suggest Reflections of Humiliation and Regret to the pious *Christian*, and are sufficient at once to gratify and confound the Speculations of the proud *Philosopher*.

BUT the human Mind, after this long Suspension of her Powers, started from her Trance, and reasserted her native Dignity and Privileges. Men† of an inquisitive Temper and intrepid

* Οἱ ζῶντες βροτοῖσι. HOM. Mortalibus ægris. VIRG.

† Humana antè oculos fœdè cum vita jaceret
In terris oppressa gravi sub Religione,
Quæ caput à cœli regionibus ostendebat
Horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans,
Primum Graius Homo mortalis tollere contrà
Est oculos ausus, primusque obistere contrà, &c.

LUCRET. I. 63.

Spirit,

Spirit, ventured to look in the Face of the Phantom SUPERSTITION, who overawed the deluded World with her formidable Aspect; and had Sagacity enough to descry some genuine Features of Christianity through the Mask which Ignorance and Priestcraft had imposed on them. A slight Attention to the Tenour of the SACRED VOLUME immediately detected the Insignificance of EXTERNAL FORMS, when put in Competition with MENTAL PIETY; and the Inconsistency of SPIRITUAL DOMINION with the EQUAL* DISPENSATION of a MEEK AND LOWLY JESUS. Maturer Information, and a happy Concurrence of incidental Motives, led the Way to a total Renunciation of Popish Tyranny in several Countries of *Europe*, and contributed to reinstate the Edifice of the Church, so much disfigured by meretricious Ornaments, and tottering

* Matt. xxiii. 8—11. Gal. iii. 28.

with

with an unwieldy Superstructure of base Materials, of *Wood, Hay and Stubble*, on her ancient Pillars, LIBERTY and REASON.

MANY of these *burning and shining Lights*, these BENEFACTORS of the human Race, have arisen in various Countries on the Continent; but our Island has been eminently distinguished for a numerous Succession of illustrious Characters, who have employed their Talents in illustrating the Christian Scheme, and vindicating the unalienable Rights of Man. Without an unrestrained Indulgence of THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY AND DISCUSSION, what were FAITH, but PASSIVE CREDULITY; and RELIGIOUS PERSUASION, but a BLIND ACCIDENTAL PREPOSSESSION, no Principle of RATIONAL Conviction, no Deduction of INTELLECTUAL Exertion, no MORAL HABIT; but a mere MECHANICAL RESULT of
an

INSPIRATION. 11

an early Bias and a systematical Education? The Records of REVELATION, which have been transmitted with pious Care through many Generations, as a Directory for *the Sons of God* through a dark and dreary Wilderness to the joyful *Land of their Inheritance*, which are submitted to us, *as to Men of Sense**, for our Examination, would become as insignificant as *a Book sealed up*, and a fatal Instrument in the Hands of Priests and Politicians to enslave and debase the Mind. It is our INTEREST, it is our DUTY, to guard the Rights

* *ὡς φρονιμοῖς* 1 Cor. x. 15. So it is justly rendered by Dr. Bell in his VERY EXCELLENT and DECISIVE TREATISE ON *the Lord's Supper*; a Treatise, which has been condemned and opposed by ARGUMENTS—*ad Veracundiam* : but—

— λαβροῖ

Παγγλωσσία, ΚΟΡΑΚΕΣ ὡς,

Ἀκραντα γαρυετον,

Διϙ πρϙ ΟΡΝΙΧΑ ΘΕΙΟΝ.

PIND. Ol. II. 156.

See Dr. Bigot's Letter to Dr. Bell.

of

of Religion and Humanity with a suspicious Care, and to employ the Advantages which they afford us, with Zeal and Diligence. We will examine the Volume of THE WORD OF GOD with an HUMBLE CONFIDENCE, as subject to HIM, and not to *Man*; and in pursuing our Researches through the various Shades of *Probability* to the Light of *Certainty*, we will pronounce with Hesitation, or decide with Firmness: and if we be so successful as to *discover* TRUTH, will have the HONESTY to *acknowledge*, and the COURAGE to *profess* it.

NOR let us be deterred from the Investigation of ANY ARTICLE of our Religion, or any proposed SCHEME OF FAITH, by frivolous Pretences of Presumption and Conceit, so scrupulously urged by some, who (it may be) from a sincere Humility, and a profound Veneration

neration for the Word of God, are unintentionally THE MOST DANGEROUS ENEMIES OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY*. Such timid Allegations carry with them an Appearance of Difingenuity, and are calculated to promote an unreflecting Acquiescence in authorised Modes of Faith, only because they have received the Sanction of national Approbation, and to discountenance the Exercise

* SEE particularly Vol. III. of BISHOP HURD'S Sermons at *Lincoln's Inn*, especially Serm. 3d. and 11th.

Instead of having Recourse to the original Fountain of Information, the greater Part of us implicitly imbibe the religious *Formularies* of our Fathers; and because some wrangling caballistic *Theologians*, fifteen or sixteen Centuries ago, picked out of the Scriptures, *totidem literis*, I know not what inexplicable Doctrines, and dignified them with the Name of AWFUL and SACRED MYSTERIES, we must acquiesce in the Delusion: and if a Man peradventure, instead of modifying his Faith by the crooked Standard of TRADITION and AUTHORITY, should assume the *Liberty* of thinking for himself, and should appeal from *the Masters on Earth* to the WORD of GOD and his own Judgement, a Charge of PRESUMPTION and PROFANENESS is presently echoed

14 A N E S S A Y O N

ercise of FREE INQUIRY and PRIVATE JUDGEMENT. What? Can the Application of our REASONING FACULTY, carefully improved and impartially exerted, to a severe Discussion of that REVELATION, which is the PERFECT-ION OF REASON, and challenges our strictest Scrutiny—can this, I say, be hazardous to ourselves, or detrimental to our Religion? No: if CHRISTIANITY be true, she will derive new Honour

echoed from every Quarter by *interested Champions* of the *Craft*: YE *ought to be* QUIET and do Nothing RASHLY—GREAT is DIANA of the EPHESIANS!

BUT however exceptionable some of the Sermons above referred to, may be thought in *some nicer* Points, many of them are superlatively excellent as *moral* Pieces: and they, as well as those of the same LEARNED and SAGACIOUS PRELATE on *Prophecy*, are, in my Opinion, perfect Models of ACCURACY of METHOD and COMPOSITION. They are at the same Time, and in a very high Degree, CORRECT, PERSPICUOUS, and ORNAMENTAL. See QUINT. INST. I. 4. 2.

and

and accumulated Evidence of her cœlestial Extraction from every Disquisition. Even the Cavils of the ignorant or conceited Unbeliever, will only serve to aggrandise her Triumphs, and augment her Lustre. Like the Sun, ascending to his meridian Strength, SHE will go on *shining more and more unto perfect Day.*

FORTUNATELY for the Advocates of Truth, every Perversion of CHRISTIANITY and the SCRIPTURES, has at the same Time offered Violence to the unbiaſſed Suggestions of COMMON-SENSE. BODILY MACERATIONS, VOWS of CELIBACY, the ADORATION of RELICS, PILGRIMAGES, HIERARCHICAL SUPREMACY, the INCARNATION of GOD, the *damnable* ATHANASIAN *Heresy* * of a TRINITY in UNITY,

* 2 Pet. ii. 1.

THREE GODS IN ONE* ; and other
 MOCKERIES of POPISH and PROTES-
 TANT Superstition, are not more
 evidently incompatible with the UN-
 OSTENTATIOUS WORSHIP, the ACTIVE
 MORALITY, the FREE SPIRIT, and the
 SIMPLE DOCTRINES of the GOSPEL,
 than repugnant to the clear Sentiments
 of UNDEPRAVED REASON. TRUTH
 indeed is ever unalterable and the same:
 and the *still small Voice* of natural Intel-
 ligence, that breathes in *every Man*
who cometh into the World, speaks, not
 in such a loud and commanding Tone,
 but in Accents as unequivocal to the
 PURGED EAR, as the Oracles of Reve-

* So says, and so says not, the *Athanasian Creed* :

THE FATHER is GOD, THE SON is GOD, and THE
 HOLY GHOST is GOD : and yet (wouldst thou have
 thought it, Reader!) THEY are NOT THREE GODS,
 but ONE GOD.

ΟΥΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ· ΟΤΙ ΜΕΤΗΛΛΑΞΑΝ ΤΗΝ ΑΑΗ-
 ΘΕΙΑΝ ΤΩ ΘΕΩ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΨΕΤΑΕΙ.

lation.

lation. They are both Emanations from the same heavenly Source of LIGHT and TRUTH*, and have been alike pronounced by HIM, who cannot lie and will not repent, to be *very good*.

THE Subject on which we are entering, the INSPIRATION of the SACRED WRITERS, has, I apprehend, in common with many other Points of Christian Doctrine, been much misunderstood, to the great Prejudice of our holy Religion. It is my Design in the following *Essay* to exhibit this Doctrine in what appears to me it's proper

* Aliusque et idem. HOR.

QUIS autem scripsit in cordibus eorum, nisi Deus digito suo? Legem utique naturalem, quam dedit Deus humano generi, et in cunctorum mentibus scripsit: unde et initia sumimus ac semina quædam ad perscrutandam capimus veritatem: quæ semina si benè excolamus, fructum vitæ afferent in nobis in Christo Jesu Domino nostro.

Origen in Num. Hom. X. quoted by LARDNER
in his *Credibility*.

C

Light,

Light, with all possible Perspicuity and Conciseness. If I be able to advance any Observations to the Satisfaction of the disinterested and judicious, or prove a Mean of engaging others of more Leisure and Ability in the Elucidation of this important Subject, I shall esteem myself to have contributed no trivial Service to the Cause of Revelation.

NOR let any Man, from a pertinacious Prepossession in Favour of established Opinions, or a malicious Interpretation of my Motives to this Undertaking, prejudge me of a Design only to depreciate the sacred Writings, and to insult the Belief of others. A Proposition is not therefore true, because authorised by long Prescription and general Consent*. THAT CHURCH, which

* VERITATI NEMO PRÆSCRIBERE POTEST, NON SPATIUM TEMPORUM, NON PATROCINIA PERSONARUM, NON PRIVILEGIUM REGIONUM. DOMINUS NOSTER
CHRISTUS

which was the INFALLIBLE STANDARD of ORTHODOXY for many Generations, is now proscribed as HERETICAL and ANTICHRISTIAN, by THOSE CHURCHES that still retain some of her most PESTILENTIAL ERRORS, and are themselves hastening to Desolation*. Let us not be influenced or intimidated by the Fallacy of SOUNDS and NAMES. Let us not prefer the Forms of USAGE and TRADITION to the Dictates of RIGHT REASON and the WORD of GOD. My Veneration for CHRISTIANITY and the SCRIPTURES is bound about my Heart. But whilst

CHRISTUS, VERITATEM se, non CONSUECUDINEM, cognominavit.

TERTULL. de VIRG. vel.—sub initio.

* *Churches* sink as generally as *Banks* in Europe, and for the same Reason. That Religion and Trade, which *at first* were OPEN and FREE, have been reduced into the MANAGEMENT of COMPANIES, and the ROGUERY of DIRECTORS.

POPE to SWIFT, Let. III.

I profess myself a *Christian**, I remember that I am also a *Man*. I embrace the Christian Revelation with a cor-

* "BUT, my Lord, although I find myself under an Obligation to relinquish my present Station in the Church of England, I do not renounce the Profession of a Christian."

DR. JEBB'S Letter to the Bishop of Norwich.

Soon after the Publication of that Letter, during some Conversation upon the Author and Subject of it in a private Company at CAMBRIDGE, I heard a young Man of King's, a sensible Person and a very good Scholar, observe, in allusion to the Passage above, *that he could not esteem JEBB a CHRISTIAN, and should be glad to know HIS Definition of one.*

As some others may possibly be as much at a Loss, as this Gentleman, for the Meaning of the Term *Christian*, it may be proper to satisfy their Doubts on this Head, from indisputable Authority, and convince them, that *Trinitarians* have no exclusive Title to that GLORIOUS DENOMINATION.

IF thou shalt CONFESS with thy Mouth the LORD JESUS, and shalt BELIEVE in thy Heart that GOD hath raised HIM from the Dead, THOU SHALT BE SAVED; (i. e. thou shalt be a CHRISTIAN.)

PAUL, Rom. x. 9.

dial

INSPIRATION. 21

dial Belief, as authenticated by an Aggregation of direct and circumstantial Evidence, sufficient to induce a rational Conviction; as inviting my Assent by the most pressing Motives; as enjoining my Obedience by the most awful Sanctions, and recommending itself to my Understanding and Affections by the plainest Indications of WISDOM and UTILITY. I accept the SCRIPTURES, as the Repository of the momentous Truths of *this* Revelation; as the GUIDE of LIFE, and the CHARTER of IMMORTALITY; as the Criterion by which my Conduct in this probationary Period of my Existence will be estimated* on the great DAY of ACCOUNT before GOD *the Judge of all*†, and my future Condition be irreversibly determined to all Eternity.

* John xii. 48, 49.

† Heb. xii. 23.

SECTION II.

The common Notion of INSPIRATION.

NULLA res nos majoribus malis implicat, quàm quo ad RUMOREM componimur, optima rati ea quæ magno assensu recepta sunt; nec ad RATIONEM, sed ad SIMILITUDINEM vivimus.

SENECA.

THOUGH it is an easy Matter to define that Idea of *Inspiration*, which predominates among the Generality of those who give themselves the Trouble of *reflecting*, or at least of *deciding*, upon this Subject; yet, either from the uninterrupted Agreement of Christians in their Opinions of this Doctrinè, or from other Causes, Authors
of

of Judgement and Reputation have so seldom discussed this delicate Point, or have adverted to it with such Circumspection and Reserve, as renders it somewhat difficult to ascertain *their* Sentiments with Precision. According to the general Persuasion, the *Inspiration* of the SACRED WRITERS appears to be conceived of, as resembling that controlling Energy, which actuated the PROPHETS among the *Jews* in the earlier Periods of their History, and the APOSTLES on the Day of *Pentecost*; not unlike the Phrensy of the Delphian Priestess among the *Heathen*, sitting on her Tripod, and uttering Oracles, as it was supposed, under the Influence of the Deity: not, however, as if accompanied with those external Marks of Perturbation*, convulsed Limbs, dis-

* ——— non vultus, non color unus,

Non comptæ mansere comæ.

VIRG.

torted Features, and staring Hair ; but with a mental Impression equally involuntary and irresistible ; an Impression that superintended the Pen and pervaded the Conceptions of the Writer*, who was employed as a passive Vehicle of the divine Communications, and, if we may so speak, as the *Amanuens* of the HOLY SPIRIT. The Advocates of the Doctrine of *Inspiration* in it's most qualified and sober Acceptation, and in whatever Manner it's Operations may be conceived of, will maintain, I presume, that a commanding Ascendancy of the HOLY SPIRIT irradiates the Mind through all her Powers with such Efficacy, as precludes the Possibility of Error and Misconception. Unless this Account be admitted, I do not understand what Meaning can be annexed to the Word, or what that

* ενδυσιαστικως εκπνεον, και διονει φοιταζον της λογης.
Longin. περι Τψ.

Doctrines of *Inspiration* is, which has ever been maintained in the Church. But to this Notion of *Inspiration*, whether it be supposed a *secret* Impression, or a Communication through the Medium of some *external* Sign, I can by no Means accede, and am now proceeding to invalidate and overthrow it. Indeed, it is perfectly immaterial, I apprehend, what Mode of Explication be adopted, if the Persuasion in any Case be, what is strenuously contended for by every Writer on this Subject, ABSOLUTE INFALLIBILITY.

SECTION III.

INSPIRATION, *in this Sense, is unnecessary.*

ΟΥΚ ΕΚΉΕΙΡΑΣΕΙΣ ΚΥΡΙΟΝ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ ΣΟΤ

MATT. iv. 7.

THE little Necessity there is of having Recourse to the Doctrine of *Inspiration* thus understood, to authenticate the HISTORICAL WRITINGS of the NEW TESTAMENT, will be demonstrably evinced, if their Credibility appear abundantly secure from other Considerations. This fundamental Rule of *natural Philosophy**, that
No

* REGULA I.

Causas rerum naturalium non plures admitti debere, quàm quæ et veræ sunt et earum phænomenis explicandis sufficiant.

DICUNT

No more Causes of Things ought to be admitted, than what are both true and sufficient for the Explication of their PHÆNOMENA, may be applied, I presume, to every possible Subject of Disquisition, and is not appropriated with Reason to Questions of *philosophical* Investigation only. The Qualifications, which appear to be indispensably requisite to the Validity of any Relation of FACTS, are the three following, exclusive of any other: A SOUND UNDERSTANDING: COMPETENT INFORMATION: and INTEGRITY of HEART.

THE *first* of these Qualities enables an Author to institute a right Judgment of Transactions from their Con-

DICUNT utique Philosophi, *Natura nihil agit frustra; et frustra fit per plura quod fieri potest per pauciora. Natura enim simplex est, et rerum causis superfluis non luxuriat.*

NEWTON's Princip. L. 3. Introduction.

fistency

sistency with the impartial Deductions of sober Reason, and from their Analogy to natural Appearances and the History of the human Mind : to distinguish between rational Probability and the Semblance of it ; to weigh and appreciate the Degrees and Diversities of Evidence with a suitable Exactness : to select, digest, and arrange the Materials of History with Discernment, and exhibit them with Perspicuity. Without this presiding Power, an Author might be *ingenuous* indeed and *well informed*, but his Relation would be a Mass of Crudity and Confusion, a frivolous and inefficient Detail of imaginary or uninteresting Events.

THE *second* of these Qualities is essential to the very Existence of HISTORY, as distinguished from FABLE, the unsubstantial Offspring of *Fancy* or *Credulity*.

NOR

INSPIRATION. 29

NOR is the *third* less necessary or important than the *two preceding*. KNOWLEDGE, if it conceal, falsify, or misrepresent, is worse than *Ignorance* and *Delusion*: and INTEGRITY of UNDERSTANDING, uninfluenced by the Principles of VIRTUE, is only calculated to sanctify and facilitate the pernicious Practices of ARTIFICE and IMPOSTURE.

I AM at a Loss to conceive what additional Qualifications can be deemed requisite to establish the Authenticity of any *historical Narration*, besides those here enumerated; STRENGTH of JUDGEMENT, ADEQUATE INFORMATION, and UNBIASSED AFFECTIONS: requisite, I mean, independent of an *entire and unadulterated Transmission to Posterity*, which is a Consideration that equally affects every History and Composition, sacred or profane, and is
foreign

30 AN ESSAY ON

foreign to the Argument under Contemplation.

LET us now apply these Positions to the Writings of the *four* EVANGELICAL HISTORIANS.

THE whole Conduct and Texture of their several Narrations indicate most unquestionably a competent Portion of Judgement and good Sense in the respective Authors. The GOSPELS carry with them such an Air of *Veracity**, and are written with such unpretend-

* LET me be permitted to produce from the Gospels an Instance of that beautiful Simplicity with which TRUTH sometimes UNINTENTIONALLY vindicates herself.

Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the Sepulchre, and seeth the linen Clothes lie, and the Napkin that was about his Head, not lying with the linen Clothes, but WRAPPED TOGETHER IN A PLACE BY ITSELF. John xx. 6, 7.

Is this like the HURRY and TREPIDATION of Men, STEALING AWAY THE BODY BY NIGHT?

ing

ing Simplicity and Candour, with such unaffected Gracefulness, such a perfect Propriety of Stile and Manner, the genuine Result of Truth and Nature, and which Artifice cannot reach ; with such manifest Indications of Benevolence and disinterested Purpose ; such an ingenuous and full Exposure of the Inapprehension and Absurdities of the principal Pillars of the Cause, and even of the Historians themselves, without the least Attempt to extenuate or excuse ; such an uniform Abstinence from all Encomium on themselves or the Hero of their Story, as entitle the Composers of them to a distinguished Pre-eminence, in Point of SINCERITY, above ALL OTHER HISTORIANS, and give their Relations in some Respects a CHARACTERISTICAL DISCRIMINATION.

NOR were the Evangelists defective in the Article of *Information*. Two of them at least were EYE-WITNESSES
of

of those Transactions which they have undertaken to record, and received the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity as they fell from the Lips of their HEAVENLY PRECEPTOR. It was their simple Purpose to exhibit in a plain and undisguised Narrative, *what* they had heard, what they had seen with their Eyes, what their Hands had handled, concerning the Words of eternal† Life‡.*

MARK, if we may believe the concurrent Testimony of ancient ecclesiastical Writers, composed his Gospel at the Instigation, or under the Direction of ST. PETER. And this Testimony is greatly corroborated by the

* 1 John i. 1. † THE SONS. THE Life.

‡ QUI ea conspicati sunt fieri, et sub oculis suis viderunt agi, testes optimi CERTISSIMIQUE auctores, et crediderunt hæc ipsi, et credenda posteris nobis HAUD EXILIBUS CUM APPROBATIONIBUS tradiderunt.

Arnob. adv. Gent. p. 32. Ed. Lug. Bat.

internal

internal Evidence of this Gospel itself, which is impressed with clear Characters of the Interference of *that* Apostle, amounting to a presumptive Proof that *he* was in some Way connected with the Composer of it. But if we had not *that* Testimony and *this* Corroboration, we know that this Evangelist was so constant a Companion of those Apostles, who enjoyed sufficient Means of Information, that his Authority for the Facts related by him must appear extremely credible.

WE cannot certainly affirm that, with Respect to the *Means of Information*, LUKE had the same Opportunities with MARK, though such a Supposition would be highly probable. He was indeed the ATTENDANT and the Friend of PAUL, who, however, does not appear to have known OUR LORD during his Ministry on Earth, and may not have been favoured with a circumstantial Knowledge of his Life in the Flesh

by Revelation, unless as far as the Concerns of his Mission might require it. But the *Judgement* and *Integrity* of this Evangelist seem unimpeachable: and if we shall not be justified in allowing him an *equal* Competency of Information with the *ocular Witnesses*, MATTHEW and JOHN, or even with MARK; yet there are such Signs of DILIGENCE and CIRCUMSPECTION imprinted on the Face of his Narrative, such AN UNIFORM ATTENTION TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THOSE FOR WHOM HE WROTE, as shew an exact and extensive Information, assisted by a PROFOUND DISCERNMENT, and almost compensate his unavoidable Inferiority to the rest.

IF then it be thus evident, that the Gospel-Historians were possessed of those Qualifications which are OF THEMSELVES SUFFICIENT TO AUTHENTICATE THEIR NARRATIVES, and to command the Assent of all
REASON-

REASONABLE MEN, who, in historical Relations, can set TRUTH and SIMPLICITY before the Ostentation of rhetorical and elaborate Composition; why should we superinduce an *unnecessary Succedaneum*? Why should we adopt, and maintain with as much Solitude as if the Credibility of the Christian Dispensation and the very Existence of Religion depended on it, the *irrational and gratuitous Hypothesis* of a miraculous Guidance and Co-operation*, *to tempt the Lord our God*?†

* Nec Deus interfit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit. HOR.

† If we were to examine the Productions of the four great Historians of Antiquity by the Test of the preceding Rules, the UNDISGUISED SIMPLICITY of the EVANGELISTS would appear to the best Advantage in Contrast with the CREDULITY of HERODOTUS, the ELABORATE and ARTIFICIAL POMP of THUCYDIDES, the CYNICAL DISINGENUITY of SALUST, and the NATIONAL ATTACHMENT of LIVY: to mention no other Peculiarities of these celebrated Writers, which deduct more or less from the *Credibility* of History.

SECTION IV.

It is inexpedient and improbable.

NE IN MAXIMIS QUIDEM REBUS quidquam adhuc inveni firmitus quod tenerem, aut quo iudicium meum dirigerem, quam id, quodcunque mihi QUAM SIMILLIMUM VERI videretur, cum ipsum illud VERUM IN OCCULTO LATERET.

Cic.

THE IGNOBLE CONDITION, and the UNLETTERED SIMPLICITY of the first Publishers of the Gospel, were Peculiarities extremely favourable to a Reception of it in the World, as a Dispensation of DIVINE ORIGINAL. *Whence have these Men this Wisdom and these mighty Works?** was an obvious Difficulty, and would not fail to strike

* Matt. xiii. 54.

the

the most incurious Observer. The co-operating Hand of God was the more conspicuously displayed in Proportion to the Inadequacy of the Means employed in the Diffemination and Establishment of Christianity : and the WORD of TRUTH was proclaimed with double Efficacy from the Lips of ignorant and unpolished *Galileans*. If a Company of profound *Philosophers* had been the commissioned Dispensers of this Revelation to the human Race, the Scepticism of future Ages might have imputed the Rapidity of it's Progress, not so much to those Attestations of supernatural Interposition by which it was accompanied, as to the Dexterity and Address of designing Men*. This Argument

* ORIGEN has a similar Observation with Respect to the *Style* of the New Testament, and as it illustrates and confirms several Positions of this Essay, I shall produce it.

Argument is insisted on with great Propriety by the intelligent APOSTLE: *We have this Treasure in earthen Vessels, that the EXCELLENCY OF THE POWER may be OF GOD and not of us**: and the Christian Religion has received essential Service from the Illustration of this Position by a Variety of able Advocates. Such a Mode of Procedure was also, I conceive, very different from what HUMAN PRUDENCE would, in all Probability, have chosen to adopt: and this Consideration should dispose us to embrace any Sentiments that are rational and well-supported, however inconsistent with our own Opinions of

Ἰσως γὰρ, says he, εἰ καλλῶ και περιβολὴν φράσεως, ὡς τὰ παρ' Ἑλλήσι θαυμάζομενα, εἶχεν ἡ γραφή, ὑπενόησεν ἂν τις ἢ ΤΗΝ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΝ κεντρατηκέναι τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐμφαινόμενὴν ἀκολοθίαν καὶ ΤΟ ΤΗΣ ΦΡΑΣΕΩΣ ΚΑΛΛΟΣ ἐψυχαγωγῆκεν αὐτὴς ἀκροῶμεντες, καὶ ἠπάτηκ' αὐτὴς προσεῖληφέναι.

Philoc. p. 25. Ed. Cant.

* 2 Cor. iv. 7. 1 Cor. i. 27. &c.

Wisdom and *Propriety*, and however contrary to our previous Conceptions.

WHATEVER Force and Beauty such Observations carry with them in Reference to the primitive Disciples, as *Preachers* of the Word, they preserve when applied to the same Persons in the Capacity of *Writers*. Would not a perfect *Consistency* of Relation, and an exact Pertinency of every Part, the unavoidable Consequences of a *plenary Inspiration*, have worne a very suspicious Aspect? Is it at all *congruous* to suppose, that they, who were FRAIL* and CONTENTIOUS†, IRASCIBLE‡ and IRRESOLUTE,|| as *Men*, should be DIVESTED OF IMPERFECTION and FALLIBILITY, as *Authors*? Would it be *expedient*, and for the *Honour* of Religion, that the Scheme and Doctrines of Chrif-

* Matt. xxvi. 74.

† Acts xv. 39.

‡ Acts xxiii. 3.

|| Gal. ii. 12.

tianity should be delivered through a Medium which precludes all Examination into the Validity and Reasonableness of their Pretensions? I will but just mention here the *Inexpediency* of such a Measure, from the Scope it would evidently have given to the Insinuations of the malicious and profane, respecting the *Collusion* of the evangelical Historians, as this Objection will be further insisted on in it's Place below.

BESIDES, as far as I can discern, the Argument for *universal* and *plenary Inspiration* would plead also with equal Cogency for *Propriety* and *Purity* of *Style*; for Perfection in the *Manner*, as well as in the *Matter*, of the Gospel-Histories. If it had been *necessary* for the Evangelists to be infallible, and for us to think them so, superior Elegance of Composition and the Graces of polished Language would have been

no

no unimportant Discrimination of their Writings from the Works of ordinary and *uninspired* Men. Surely THE SPIRIT OF GOD is not *ineloquent, of a slow Mouth and of a slow Tongue.**—And such a conspicuous Distinction might have secured the Scriptures from the disparaging Animadversions of fastidious and learned Critics, and would, no Doubt, have established their Claim to a heavenly Illumination beyond the Possibility of Dispute, by exhibiting, on the most superficial Inspection, an irresistible Inducement to our Acceptance and Veneration.

LET not any Friend of Revelation conceive of this Mode of reasoning, as arbitrary and unsubstantial. Let the most unanimated tasteless Reader compare the loftiest passages in the Page of the GOSPEL-HISTORY with the elo-

* Exod. iv. 10.

quent,

quent, the sublime, the impassioned Strains of ancient PROPHECY. He will soon acknowledge an immense Disparity between the Thoughts and Language of MAN and of his CREATOR.*

NOR would the Ends of an *absolute Inspiration* have been effectually ascertained, unless the same Superintendence, which guarded the Memoirs of the Gospel

* I CAN point out, however, a short Passage in that Gospel which has the fewest Pretensions to *Inspiration*, to which I have never found an Equal for SIMPLICITY, *Pathos*, and for that Figure which *Rhetoricians* call a *Vision*.

And all the People who came together to that Sight, BEHOLDING THE THINGS THAT WERE DONE, SMOTE THEIR BREASTS, AND RETURNED. Luke xxiii. 48.

THEIR Consternation and Solitude, you see, were too great for Utterance!

AND to relieve the Reader, and to compensate in some Degree the Dryness of this *Essay*, I will subjoin
two

Gospel from the Intrusion of Error when they were *first* composed, had watched over the innumerable *Transcripts* of them in *After-ages* with equal Circumspection. What acrimonious Contentions have harassed the Christian World, what a Multiplicity of discordant Opinions have originated, from the IGNORANCE, INADVERTENCY, or MISGUIDED ZEAL of *Copyists* and *Translators*! PROVIDENCE might for

two similar Instances of the Sublime, from the two most admired Poets of Antiquity, only inferior to that already produced; and he may consult Longin. Sect. IX. sub initio, Ed. Pearce, for two more of the same Nature, perhaps as fine.

Ως εφαμην· Ψυχη δε ποδωμεΘ· Αιακιδαιο
ΦΟΙΤΑ, ΜΑΚΡΑ ΒΙΒΩΣΑ, κατ' ασφοδελον λειμωννα,
Γηθοσυνη ο οι υιον εφην αριδεικετον ειναι.

HOM. Od. XI. 537.

————— Tu quoque magnam
Partem opere in tanto, SINNERET DOLOR, Icare, haberes.
BIS CONATUS ERAT casus effingere in auro;
BIS PATRIÆ CECIDERE MANUS.

VIRG. Æn. VI. 30.

once

once have violated the fundamental Law of her Œconomy in the Assertion of this favourite and essential Point. SHE might have perpetuated, in this *single Instance**, her miraculous Exertions beyond the Period limited to

* Ἰδὲ ἐγὼ μετ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ΕΩΣ ΤΗΣ ΣΥΝΤΕΛΕΙΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΙΩΝΟΣ. Matt. xxviii. 20.

ECCE ego vobiscum sum usque AD CONSUMMATIONEM SEculi. Novatus, quoted by Lardner in his *Credib.*

UNTIL THE COMPLETION OF THE AGE. A Text, which determines *à priori* that much agitated Question about the Point of Time to be assigned for the *Cessation of Miracles in the Church*. This is not the Place to shew that the Expression is merely JEWISH, and susceptible of no other than the *limited* Meaning which I have affixed to it. Suffice it to observe, that as the *material World*, when called into Existence by an *extraordinary Act* of divine Power, WAS CONSIGNED TO THE REGULAR OPERATION OF GENERAL LAWS; ANALOGY might lead us to expect, that *the World to come* (ἡ οἰκουμενὴ ἡ μελλουσα. Heb. ii. 5.) *the new Creation* (2 Cor. v. 17.) after it had been sufficiently authenticated by a *Series of Miracles*, would be left to recommend itself by its OWN PROPER EVIDENCES, and to spread by THE NATURAL MEANS AND METHODS OF PROPAGATION.

their

their Display, the Establishment of the Christian Dispensation in the *Apostolic* Age, and the Annihilation of the *Jewish* Polity in the Destruction of JERUSALEM.

AND it appears to me at least not *improbable*, that if the HOLY SPIRIT imparted to the Evangelists an *equal* Portion of Intelligence, (which is a reasonable Supposition) their Language and Manner of Composition would have borne some *Resemblance*. But to this it will be readily replied, *they were left to their own particular Judgement and Ideas in this Matter*. True.—And have we not Reason to conclude from examining and comparing their Histories, that they were *altogether* permitted to write severally such an Account as *they* conceived to be most proper and useful *upon the whole*?

FOR

FOR what Purpose too can we imagine that our Lord selected *twelve* Apostles, as PERPETUAL ATTENDANTS on his Person, but, in particular, to furnish them with an Opportunity of ACQUAINTING THEMSELVES with the Nature of his Office, the Tenour of his Dispensation, and the Transactions of his Life, in Order to render them COMPETENT WITNESSES of these important Truths to every Generation? We should have possessed a more unequivocal Sign of *Inspiration*, if God had appointed to record the Life of JESUS, a Set of Men who had *never known* HIM, or his *Disciples*, and had enjoyed no *human Means* of Information.

SECTION V.

*It is disclaimed by the SACRED WRITERS
themselves.*

ΑΝΔΡΕΣ, ΤΙ ΤΑΥΤΑ ΠΟΙΕΙΤΕ; ΚΑΙ ΗΜΕΙΣ
ΟΜΟΙΟΠΑΘΕΙΣ ΕΣΜΕΝ ΥΜΙΝ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΙ.

Acts xiv. 15.

BUT now we will turn to the sacred
Historians *themselves*, and see whe-
ther *they* give any Account of this
Subject, who certainly must be allowed
to have known the State of their own
Minds, and the Species of their own
Endowments, better than *we*.

LUKE, in the introductory Verses
of his Gospel*, professes to compile a

* Luke i. 1—5.

Narrative

Narrative of those Things, which were confidently believed among Christians*, (meaning thereby the *Life and Doctrines* of JESUS CHRIST†) in *Imitation* of some other Writers, not mentioned by Name, who had derived *their* Information from *Eye-witnesses and Ministers of the Word*. It were SUPERFLUOUS and ABSURD to recommend his History from the *Authenticity* of his Intelligence, had he been indebted for his Materials to a *different* and *supernatural Mean* of Knowledge. He does not say that he relied on the GIFT of INSPIRATION for his Acquaintance with the Subject he had undertaken to display; but on AN ACCURATE INVESTIGATION OF PARTICULARS down from the Origin of Christianity. His Expressions are in Effect a POSITIVE

* *Confidently believed, or certainly come to pass:* πληροφορεω seems capable of either Sense.

† Acts i. 1.

and

BUT the Evangelists speak so little in their own Persons as *Historians*, and so very seldom concerning *themselves*, that I must confess myself unable to produce any Passages from MATTHEW and MARK, that are applicable to the present Inquiry. I presume, however,

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that

that the most zealous Patrons of the Doctrine of *Inspiration* will not contend for any Distinction between the sacred Writers, but will easily allow an entire *Equality* in this Respect; so that, if the preceding Inferences be just, we need no additional Corroboration of them.

YET it may be useful to remark, that JOHN speaks of what he had testified of JESUS and his Achievements*, as of Things which were *transacted* in the *Presence* of the Disciples; as OBJECTS therefore of OCULAR INSPECTION, not of INTUITIVE DISCERNMENT. And when he gives his Attestation to a very *singular Fact* with *uncommon Earnestness* and *Asseveration*†, he insists upon the Veracity of his Testimony to it, because it was a Circumstance which had fallen under *his own immediate Observation*. And at the Conclusion of his Gospel‡, where the same empha-

* John xx. 30.

† xix. 35.

‡ xxi. 24.

tical

tical Assertion, *We know that his Testimony is true*, again occurs, we are led to conclude, by comparing it with the parallel Passage alledged above, that his Knowledge of the Events recorded in the foregoing History was *experimental*, the sole Result of what he had SEEN and HEARD, not *unpremeditated Suggestions* of the INSPIRING SPIRIT of GOD, whose Co-operation he does not *claim* or *insinuate* in any Part of his History.

IT will now be proper to advert to some Passages in the Gospels, which wear an Aspect unfriendly to these Conclusions. I must beg Leave, however, to premise, that if the preceding Deductions be legitimate, those Texts of Scripture, which have been generally understood to establish the Doctrine of a *permanent* and *plenary Inspiration*, MUST necessarily be ERRONEOUSLY INTERPRETED.

THE first pertinent Passage occurs in our LORD's Commission to the *twelve Apostles** :

And ye shall be brought before Governors and Kings on my Account, for a Testimony to them and the Gentiles.

But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what to speak : for it is not ye who speak, but the SPIRIT of your FATHER which speaketh in you.

ON which, and the similar Passages, I observe,

I. THAT this PLENTIFUL SUPPLY of *divine Assistance* was to be vouchsafed to the *Apostles* at a Juncture peculiarly *critical* and *pressing*; when their Fidelity and Resolution would be put to the severest Trial: when they were called upon to apologise for their Con-

* Matt. x. 18, &c. parallel to it are Luke xii. 11. xxi. 15.

duct and the Profession of their Faith at the Tribunal of INSIDIOUS and BLOOD-THIRSTY MEN, ready to ANTICIPATE their *Guilt*, and determined to pass the Sentence of Condemnation upon the slightest Evidence, or even upon the simple ACKNOWLEDGEMENT of the CHRISTIAN NAME*: when any Inadvertency on their Parts and an Inability to defend their Cause, would disparage the Religion which they professed, and become a capital Impediment

* Εφ' ἡμῶν ΤΟ ΟΝΟΜΑ, ΩΣ ΕΛΕΓΧΟΝ, λαμβανετε.

JUST. MART. Ap. I. 3. Ed. Ashton.

Ἡμῖν δὲ—Τὸ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΙ ἀπεχθάνεσθε· ὅτι γὰρ ΤΑ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΑ ΜΙΣΟΥΣ ΑΞΙΑ, ΑΛΛΑ ΤΟ ΑΔΙΚΗΜΑ δικῆς καὶ τιμωρίας.

ATHENAG. Leg. P. 5, Ed. Ox.

NEC MEDIOCRITER HÆSITAVI, an—NOMEN IPSUM, ETIAMSI FLAGITIIS CAREAT, an flagitia cohærentia nomini PUNIANTUR.

PLIN. ad TRAJ.

Impediment to it's Propagation: at a Juncture, that would occasion a most painful Conflict between their Love of Life and all the Endearments of it, and their Apprehensions of the dreadful Alternative of Apostacy, the consequent Disavowal of *them* by their MASTER and their JUDGE on the SOLEMN DAY of his APPEARING.

2. BECAUSE such a signal Interposition was *only* promised on *this* Emergency, we are hereby furnished with a strong Presumption against it's

SI deferantur et ARGUANTUR, (*i. e. esse Christiani*)
PUNIENDI sunt.

TRAJ. ad PLIN. Ep. X. 97 and 98.

THIS strange Method of proceeding almost tempts one to cry out with the enraged Churl in the Play,

————— Ut vos cum vestra
Monstratione MAGNUS PERDAT JUPITER.

JUVENAL might have taught the *equitable* Pliny and his *humane* Master a better Lesson. See some noble Lines, Sat. VIII. 79—85.

Perpetuity

Perpetuity and invariable Influence on their Minds.

IT is, therefore, highly *unreasonable* to infer from this Passage a *Continuance* of the Gift of *Inspiration* through *every Circumstance* of Life, and particularly for the Purpose of writing a Detail of Occurrences which they had SEEN and HEARD, an Occasion of no great Urgency, nor requiring such a *signal Interference*.

THE only remaining Passage which I think it needful to consider, is the following :

But when HE, THE SPIRIT OF THE TRUTH†, is come, HE will guide you into all THE TRUTH†.*

* John xvi. 13.

† της αληθείας—την αληθειαν; i. e. *evangelical TRUTH.*

56 AN ESSAY ON

THIS is Part of our SAVIOUR's last Address to his Disciples, and was designed to console them under their Sorrow at his Departure. It is an Inference from the preceding Verse, which will conduct us to a true Interpretation.

I have yet many Things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

But when HE, THE SPIRIT OF THE TRUTH, is come, HE will guide you into all THE TRUTH.

As if he had said, "Ye have many Things to learn, and much to rectify, with Respect to your Notions of my Character*, and that of my Dispensation†. But your *present* Misconcep-

* THEY still thought of him as of a *conquering Messiah*, and intending to erect a *temporal Dominion*. See Luke xxii. 24. Acts i. 6.

† As designed to include the whole Race of Man, *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*. An extraordinary Interposition was necessary to convince the *Apostles* of this. See Acts, Chap. x. throughout.

tions

tions and inveterate Prejudices incapacitate you for a *circumstantial* and *unreserved* Representation of the true State of these important Matters. When the HOLY SPIRIT, whom I shall be authorised to send after my Ascension, shall come unto you, HE will gradually enlighten your Understandings, and purge the Grossness of your Conceptions. HE will take you by the Hand, and conduct you* to the Knowledge of those *Gospel-Truths*, which are now so imperfectly apprehended by you, or are contrary to your Persuasions."

WHAT Relation this Passage has to a *permanent* and *plenary Inspiration* residing in the Evangelists, though usually alledged in Support of this Doctrine, I confess myself unable to discover. The Business of the HOLY SPIRIT, we see, was to expand their Hearts to more liberal Conceptions, to correct

* ὁδηγεῖ.

their

their Prejudices, and to remove their Ignorance: to instruct them, in short, in what they did not *feel* and *know*, and had therefore no Concern with Matters of actual *Experience* and *Observation*.

SEC-

SECTION VI.

Is inconsistent with their Writings.

ΑΝΑΚΡΙΝΟΝΤΕΣ ΤΑΣ ΓΡΑΦΑΣ, ΕΙ ΕΧΟΙ
ΤΑΥΤΑ ΟΤΙΩΣ.

Acts xvii. 11.

I PROCEED to the decisive Test of an INTERNAL ARGUMENT deduced from the Tenour of the Gospels themselves; and will demonstrate the Inconsistency of this Hypothesis of *Inspiration* and the consequent *Infallibility* of the Evangelists, with their own plain Assertions, by comparing one Gospel with another. A Variety of *inconsistent* and *contradictory* Positions have been detected and exposed by sceptical or malicious Men, with such Effect as to excite the Solitude of
many

many a pious, but unreflecting Christian, and the Scoffs of the unbelieving and profane. But the Scandal of the one, and the Triumph of the other, are equally precluded by exploding this vexatious Doctrine of *Inspiration*. It is my Intention to point out *one* or *two* clear Instances of Incoherency out of a Multiplicity that present themselves, which will as effectually answer the Purpose I have in View, as a more select and circumstantial Exemplification, if they can be proved irreconcilable with the *permanent* Influence of a supernatural Illumination.

1. MY first Instance is the Account of a Miracle related by *three* Evangelists, which is not studiously chosen because more pertinent than *some others* that might be adduced, but because it is one of the first Events occurring in the *Order of Time*, so generally recorded. It is as follows :

Matthew

INSPIRATION. 61

Matthew, Chap. ix.

Luke, Chap. viii.

18. *While he spake these Things unto them, behold there came a certain Ruler and worshipped him, saying, My Daughter IS NOW DEAD*; but come and lay thy Hand upon her, and she shall live.*

41. *And behold, there came a Man, named Jairus, and he was a Ruler of the Synagogue; and he fell down at Jesus' Feet, and besought him that he would come into his House:*

19. *And Jesus arose and followed him, and so did his Disciples.*

42. *For he had one only Daughter, about twelve Years of Age, and SHE LAY A DYING.——*

49. *While he yet spake, there cometh ONE from the Ruler of the Synagogue's House, saying to him, Thy Daughter IS DEAD: trouble not the Master.*

* ETEAETHZEN.

Mark,

62 AN ESSAY ON

Mark, Chap. v.

22. *And behold, there cometh one of the Rulers of the Synagogue, Jairus by Name; and when he saw him, he fell at his Feet.*

23. *And besought him greatly, saying, My little Daughter LIETH AT THE POINT OF DEATH: come and lay thy Hands on her, that she may be healed, and she shall live.*

24. *And Jesus went with him and much People followed him, and thronged him.——*

35. *While he yet spake, there came from the Ruler of the Synagogue's House, CERTAIN MEN, who said, Thy Daughter IS DEAD: why troublest thou the Master any further?*

IN this short Relation appear *two Inconsistencies*: in one Particular, MARK and LUKE agree in Opposition to MATTHEW; in another, MARK and LUKE disagree with each other. A little Ingenuity, I very well know, with the Help of some specious *Hypothesis*

thesis and some Torture of the Expression, would accommodate these Accounts without much Difficulty: but a plain unprejudiced Understanding, who contemplates them as thus exhibited in their natural State, must allow a *Contradiction*.

AT the same Time, any Reader, unshackled by the Chains of System, will extricate himself with Ease from this Perplexity, and immediately perceive { the *Unimportance*, or rather the *Utility*, of these Variations: but he, who pertinaciously adheres to the Doctrine of *full and absolute Inspiration*, can by no Artifice evade the Charge. These Objections, trivial as they are, must ever remain to *him* INSUPERABLE Embarrassments, and can never be reconciled with his Opinions.

2. THE second Example to be produced, is of far greater Consequence,
and

and cannot possibly be adjusted by any qualifying Supposition whatsoever.

Matt. Chap. xxvii.

Mark, Chap. xv.

44. THE THIEVES 32. *And THEY, who*
ALSO, who were cruci- *were crucified with him,*
fied with him, CAST REVEILED HIM.*
 THE SAME IN HIS
 TEETH*.

Luke, Chap. 23.

39. *And ONE of THE MALEFACTORS who*
were banged, RAILED ON HIM, saying, If thou
be the Christ, save thyself and us.

40. *But THE OTHER answering, REBUKED*
HIM, saying, Dost not even† thou fear God,
seeing thou art in the same Condemnation?

41. *And we indeed justly, for we receive the*
due Reward of our Deeds: but this Man hath
done Nothing amiss.

42. *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember*
me, when thou comest into thy Kingdom.

* ωνειδιζον.

† εδε ου.

43. *And*

43. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, TO-DAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.*

IN *these* Passages, at least, we are presented with as palpable a Contradiction as human Language can express; and, I apprehend, either MATTHEW and MARK, or LUKE, must be clearly convicted of FALLIBILITY and MISTAKE. If LUKE indeed had asserted simply, that *one* of the Thieves *only* reviled him, and had made no particular Exception with Respect to the *other*, as in another Instance of a similar Variation from ST. MATTHEW*; though the Inconsistency would have remained an unanswerable Argument in our Favour, such a slight Variation might have been disregarded. But when an Event took place, so momentous and PRÆTERNATURAL, as the INSTANTANEOUS CONVERSION and ACCEPTANCE of a DELINQUENT EXPIRING

* Compare Matt. viii. 28. with Luke viii. 27.

ON A CROSS, we feel ourselves deeply interested in a true Determination of this Matter; nor can we account for this capital OMISSION, or rather CONTRADICTION, of *two* Evangelists, on the Supposition of the Truth of this Transaction, but from their IGNORANCE; nor can we acquit *them* of *Ignorance*, without accusing *another* Evangelist of MISTAKE.

THOUGH the concurrent Testimony of *two* Evangelists may be thought to preponderate against the solitary Evidence of ST. LUKE, especially as MATTHEW was an APOSTLE and a constant Attendant of our LORD; yet we must recollect, that all the Apostles, except JOHN*, were either absent from the Crucifixion†, (which is most probable) or stood at so great a Distance from the Cross‡, as to be incapable of

* John xix. 26.

† Matt. xxvi. 56. Mark xiv. 50.

‡ Luke xxiii. 49.

hearing

hearing any Conversation that might pass between JESUS and the Thieves: so that MATTHEW may have had no better Means of knowing the Truth, than LUKE. And if MATTHEW had mistaken or were misinformed, MARK (to speak freely) was not unlikely to adopt his Error: for his Gospel, in my Opinion, is little more than a compendious Transcript from the other, accommodated indeed to a particular Class of Christians, and enriched with a few circumstantial Additions, chiefly such as an *Eye-Witness* might easily associate with the Facts, and which therefore PETER in all Probability suggested. Yet, I must confess, if this Account is erroneous, it is perfectly unaccountable, that PETER, who is recorded to have *approved*, if he did not *dictate*, that Gospel, should never inquire the Truth of JOHN, who stood near the Cross, probably during the whole Time of the Crucifixion. I am

aware that the Date of LUKE's History appears from *internal Evidence* to be posterior to that of MARK; but we cannot help supposing, that such an EXTRAORDINARY TRANSACTION must have been currently reported among Christians, previous to the Publication of *either* Narrative.

WE see what Difficulties present themselves, if the *Error* be imputed to MATTHEW and MARK. We will now contemplate some further Inconveniences, which occur to the reluctant Mind, from supposing the Truth of the Relation given by ST. LUKE.

AND in *this* Point of View, the Question grows still more embarrassing and difficult of Solution. This gratuitous Pardon and Acceptance of the Malefactor, on the simple Acknowledgement of his Guilt, seems equally incompatible with the clear Deductions
of

of REASON, and the whole Tenour of REVELATION. It strikes at the very Root of RELIGION and MORAL VIRTUE. *To do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with our God**, are the Duties required of every Son of Man by the uniform Voice of Scripture, as the INDISPENSABLE TITLE to the present Regards and future Recompence of our HEAVENLY FATHER. All habitual and unreformed Sinners are declared by the GREAT APOSTLE UNFIT for the KINGDOM *of Christ and of God*†; nor will they ever be REMEMBERED BY OUR LORD‡ among the Citizens of *the heavenly Jerusalem*. *Without Holiness and Purity of Heart, no Man shall see God*.—But here we behold a Culprit, who, to all Appearance, had pursued through Life a Course

* Micah vi. 8. † 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. Eph. v. 5.

† ΜΗΣΘΗΤΙ ΜΟΥ, ΚΥΡΙΕ, —ΕΝ ΤΗ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑ ΣΟΥ. Luke xxiii. 42.

of Rapine and Injustice, and was at length suffering the judicial Punishment due to his Misdeeds; we behold this Man, I say, whom the Laws of human Society had adjudged unworthy of an Abode on EARTH, received into PARADISE, ON THE BARE CONFESSION OF HIS SINS, without being able to certify the Sincerity of this Confession by the Emendation of his future Conduct. CHRIST, no Doubt, could pronounce upon the Merit of his Acknowledgements without such Experiment, from his Knowledge of the secret Intentions of the Heart*. This Mode of Procedure, however, is not analogous to the usual Course of God's Administration, or conformable to the Spirit and Declarations of the Gospel.

BESIDES, the Terms in which the Malefactor conveyed his Petition, infer

* Matt. ix. 4. John ii. 25.

some Acquaintance with JESUS and his Character, which is no inconsiderable Aggravation of his Guilt*.

AFTER all, it is *possible*, I allow, that this Man may have been more *unfortunate* and *indiscreet*, than *habitually wicked*: yet we must, on the other Hand, confess, that such a Relation, briefly exhibited, without any Explanation or alleviating Circumstances, has some Appearance of *Imprudence*, especially as it encourages an Opinion of dangerous Tendency; and we know in Fact, that some seducing and fatal Persuasions, subversive of genuine Piety, *have been* derived from it.

BUT the most inexplicable Doctrine which this Piece of History has been generally thought to countenance, is that of an INTERMEDIATE STATE

* 2 Pet. ii. 21.

of LIFE and SENSIBILITY between the DISSOLUTION of the BODY and the GENERAL RESURRECTION. THIS DAY *shalt thou be with me in PARADISE**.

IT is foreign to the Design of *this* Essay to enter into an elaborate and formal Discussion of this Doctrine; a Doctrine, that may be refuted by accumulated Proof from the Scriptures of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT, exclusive of what has been already deduced in Abundance by learned and

* THIS Incongruity occasioned much Perplexity among *inquisitive* Divines in ORIGEN's Time.

ΑΜΑ ΤΩ ΕΞΟΔΩ, says he, εν τῷ παραδεισῷ—εσεσθαι τε δεῖ—ΕΤΑΡΑΞΕ ΤΙΝΑΣ, ΩΣ ΑΣΥΜΦΩΝΟΝ. Comm. in Joh. quoted by Lardner, Vol. III. P. 2, of his *Credibility*. Ως ασυμφωνον—as *inconsistent*: inconsistent, I suppose, with the uniform Declarations of Scripture concerning THE FUTURE DAY of Retribution. They, who were offended at this Appearance of *Inconsistency*, suspected the Text of *Interpolation*; which ORIGEN calls, an AUDACIOUS Suspicion.

impartial

impartial Men*, which of itself constitutes a Collection of Evidence, as complete and cogent as can be offered to the Contemplation of the human Mind. It is MOST SURPRISING, that Writers of Learning and Sagacity can still persevere in their Zeal for an Opinion which is beset on every Side with insuperable Difficulties; when the contrary Hypothesis reflects so much Honour and Importance on the CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION and the AUTHOR of it. But it is still MORE SURPRISING, that they can expect to overthrow such a Mass of persuasive Reasoning by the feeble Efforts of ONE or TWO solitary Arguments†.

SUFFICE

* SEE particularly BISHOP LAW's *Appendix* in his *Considerations*, and a *Historical View of the Controversy concerning an intermediate State*.

† SEE MR. TOWNSON's *Discourses on the Gospels*, P. 179. This very excellent Author produces in Confirmation of the Doctrine of *an intermediate State*, the *Parable*

74 AN ESSAY ON

SUFFICE it *now* to say, in the Prosecution of our Argument, in Opposition to this Doctrine of an *intermediate State*, that it SUBVERTS THE FUNDAMENTAL ARTICLE OF OUR FAITH, nay, EVACUATES CHRISTIANITY ITSELF. If IMMORTALITY, or *the Continuation of Existence after Death**, be an INHERENT PROPERTY of the

Parable of the rich Man and Lazarus, and contends that it is a *true* and *consistent* Representation. But are not Lazarus and the rich Man *in the Body* and *out of the Body* at the same Time? Compare Luke xvi. 24. with 1 Cor. xv. 50.

IF the Advocates for a literal Acceptation of the Parable in Question should endeavour to elude this Objection, by alledging, that this is merely a Piece of *Embellishment necessary to the building up of the Relation*, why may we not extend this Reasoning to the WHOLE Parable, and maintain it to be an EMBLEMATICAL REPRESENTATION, descriptive in general of the Happiness and Misery reserved for the virtuous and wicked in a future State?

* I AM aware of this *Contradiction in Terms*; but the Doctrine in Question is one too.

human

human Soul, it is FALSELY asserted by the APOSTLE PAUL*, that, ALL MEN DIE in Consequence of their Relation to ADAM, and WILL REVIVE on the great DAY OF THE RESURRECTION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. We may indeed have Recourse to an evasive, though not unusual Expedient on these pressing Occasions, and explain away this CAPITAL, this ESSENTIAL TRUTH, THIS BULWARK OF OUR FAITH, by the dextrous Intervention of *Metaphor*, and call this a *figurative* Death. But this Mode of Interpretation offers extreme Violence to the Language and the Sense of Scripture, and supposes the most important Articles of the Christian Creed to be conveyed in *Figure*. If, however, the Death incurred through ADAM by all Mankind, be *figurative*, the Life and the Resurrection achieved for us by JESUS CHRIST, must be *figurative* too;

* 1 Cor. xv. 21—23.

76 AN ESSAY ON

so that our FAITH is VAIN, and our HOPE is also VAIN.

THESE Considerations amount to some *Presumption of Mistake or Misinformation* on the Side of LUKE.

BUT if this Piece of History be indeed authentic, the last Difficulty, respecting an *intermediate State*, may be avoided, and the Passage cleared up, by a different Punctuation. *Verily I say unto thee THIS DAY, thou shalt be with me in PARADISE.*—As if he had said, *I assure thee of a Truth* EVEN NOW, ON THIS VERY DAY—at a Time when thou seest me in such a HELPLESS STATE, in such Circumstances of Humiliation and Disgrace; when there appears SO LITTLE PROSPECT OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF MY PROMISE—THOU SHALT BE WITH ME IN PARADISE*.

LET

* JESUS, no Doubt, would speak *intelligibly* to the Thief; and learned Commentators, particularly LIGHT-FOOT,

LET the Advocates of an *intermediate State* go now and call this a *very bad** Interpretation ! Let them still persuade themselves that the words *this Day*, thus connected, have *no tolerable Force*, and are no Improvement of the Sense, but a Burden to it ! We can only appeal to the UNPREJUDICED READER to determine, whether any Expression can be more SIGNIFICANT and EMPHATICAL.

WHAT shall we say to JOHN's Silence about this Transaction ? Is it not *mysterious* ? especially if LUKE's Account be *true*, as the Authentication of such a remarkable Particular was certainly an Object worthy of his Attention.—To

FOOT, have shewn that the *Jews* of that Time understood by *Paradise*, the Place of Happiness in general reserved for the Righteous, as contradistinguished from *Hell*, the Place of Torment ; not of an *imperfect intermediate State of Expectation*.

* SEE TOWNSON as above, p. 180.

this

this it may be replied, that it was JOHN's Intention to supply the *Deficiencies* of the other EVANGELISTS. But JOHN has minutely related the whole Business of the Crucifixion, with much Repetition of their Accounts; and this very Circumstance, left so ambiguous and undetermined in the former Histories, was itself a *Deficiency*, and demanded Rectification.

PERHAPS, as he was under a Necessity of contradicting *one* EVANGELIST at least, he acquiesced in this Omission, rather than assert any Thing that might tend in any Degree to invalidate or disparage the Records of the GOSPEL.

BEFORE we dismiss the Subject of this Section, which might with Ease be considerably enlarged by *direct Argument* or *fair Inference* from the HOLY SCRIPTURES, it will not be beside our Purpose to remark into what Embarrassment

ment Authors of Distinction sometimes bring themselves, merely, as it should seem, through *Inconsideration*, and a *slavish Habit* of believing from *Authority* and *Prescription*. In discussing the present Question in particular, their Situation is very delicate and distressing. Much aukward Labour is employed, much dextrous Refinement called in, and many a saving Qualification introduced, to preserve the Equilibrium between the prevailing Notion of *Inspiration*, and the *Credit* and *Consistency* of the EVANGELISTS.

A VALUABLE Illustrator of the GOSPELS above referred to*, may be included under this Description; who appears to me under no little Perplexity, when he attempts to reconcile his Positions and the Discordances of the EVANGELISTS with *Inspiration* and *Infallibility*. We will just advert to a few

* MR. TOWNSON.

of his Observations, that are applicable to the present Subject. His Example will suggest a salutary Lesson to the *young* Student of Theology*. If Writers of such Learning, Ingenuity and Discernment, can suffer themselves to be carried away by the Current of popular Opinion; with what Circumspection should we guard in our earlier Years against a *passive* and an *unsearching* Disposition†! With what Care and Scruple should we try even those Doctrines which are UNIVERSALLY ADOPTED, at the Touchstone of rational Disquisition!

HE endeavours to shew, and with great Ability and Success, that the

* ETENIM si NON FACILE EST ab errore apprehensam RESIPISCERE animam, sed NON OMNIMODO IMPOSSIBILE EST errorem EFFUGERE, APPOSITA EVRITATE.

Iren. adv. HÆR. III. 2.

† ἀδύνατον ἔστιν. Rom. i. 28.

Variations

Variations of the EVANGELISTS are solely the Result of *educational Opinions, local Attachments, incidental Associations,* or a *judicious Adaptation* of their respective Histories to the Circumstances and Exigences of that Denomination of Christians, for whose Use they were more immediately intended. But if their Acquaintance with the Facts related by them, was derived from a *personal Communication* with CHRIST himself, or their Connection with those who had sufficient Means of Information; and if they gave, like all other Authors of Understanding, such a Representation of these Facts as they judged most prudent and efficacious; what is become of his GIFT of INSPIRATION? What Meaning can he possibly affix to these Words? Do not these Concessions utterly evacuate every supposable Purpose of *that Gift* in the EVANGELISTS as *Writers*? What is this, but to *allow* the Doctrine of IN-

G

SPARATION

SPARATION in *Words*, and *proscribe* it in *Reality*?

IN comparing two parallel Passages of MARK and LUKE*, where MARK's Relation is more *circumstantial*, Mr. TOWNSON observes†: *The Circumstance, that When Jesus was gone forth into the Way, there came one running and kneeled to him, is one of those little Incidents that characterise the Narration of a Beholder. Of these there are many in St. Mark, which St. Luke would naturally omit.*

BUT, may we not say, why should ST. LUKE *naturally omit* a striking and pathetic Incident, when he must have been acquainted with it from *Inspiration*?—And for the same Reason we may add, was it not superfluous in ST. PETER to inform MARK of these

* Mark x. 17—20. Luke xviii. 18—21. † P. 55.

minute Particulars? Could the GIFT of the *Evangelist* receive any Benefit from the EXPERIENCE of the *Apostle*?

BESIDES, if each *succeeding* EVANGELIST had perused the *preceding* GOSPELS, as Mr. TOWNSON thinks with the highest Degree of Probability, what could possibly induce a *posterior* Writer to VARY from his *Predecessor*, and even to CONTRADICT him, but a well-grounded Persuasion of some MISINFORMATION or MISTAKE?

OTHER Objections of the same Kind present themselves: but I forbear; that no one may construe a REGARD for TRUTH into a mean and malignant Pleasure of carping at an Author of great and deserved Reputation, to whom both I and every Lover of the GOSPEL, owe many Obligations.

SECTION VII.

*Is DETRIMENTAL to the Cause of
REVELATION.*

*If thou wilt make me an Altar of Stone, thou shalt
not build it of HEWN STONE: for if thou lift up
THY TOOL upon it, thou hast POLLUTED it,*

Exod. xx. 25.

THE Doctrine of *Inspiration* appears to be injurious to the Interests of the CHRISTIAN REVELATION, contemplated as a wise and reasonable Institution, contrived by the DIVINE MIND for the Use and Contemplation of INTELLIGENT CREATURES, from a Variety of Considerations.

I. THIS Opinion places the *Credibility* of the GOSPELS upon a Foundation

tion very different from that of EVERY OTHER authentic and accepted History, by superinducing an extraneous Motive of Belief, which evacuates at once every Species of Attestation, *historical, prophetic, and moral*: and this PECULIARITY of EVIDENCE has an obvious Tendency to *lessen*, and even to *annihilate*, that *Credibility*.

2. THIS is an IRRATIONAL *Hypothesis*.—For a previous Persuasion of the indisputable Veracity, the perfect Consistency, and the entire Reasonableness of any Narrative, must of Consequence supersede all *Necessity*, and even *Propriety*, of examining it's Contents, and of investigating the Claims of any Theory, or Detail of Occurrences, which it may exhibit. We must receive it's Propositions without Hesitation; not from any PRINCIPLES of LEGITIMATE CONVICTION, but merely because it is *inspired*. This sacrilegious Divorce of

REASON and REVELATION will unavoidably excite, even in Minds not very sceptical and incredulous, some Suspicions unfriendly to CHRISTIANITY. They will be apt to infer, and not unjustly, an INSUFFICIENCY of PROPER EVIDENCE for the Authentication of *that* Religion, which demurs at an Appeal to the Judicature of REASON and COMMON-SENSE: and under the Influence of this Prepossession, they will hastily pronounce it an IMPLEMENT of POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY, constructed to subserve the sinister Purposes of IGNORANCE, PRIESTCRAFT, and SUPERSTITION. TRUTH, they will say, is not afraid of *exposing* herself to the strictest Scrutiny and the clearest Light. ERROR alone, *conscious* of her *Deformity*, flies for Refuge from the Eye of Day to MYSTERY and DARKNESS.

3. Is it not *dishonourable* to the CHRISTIAN REVELATION to suppose, that

that with all the concurrent Evidence of divine Original, resulting from *internal Character* and *outward Attestation*, she still requires the Accession of an artificial and rotten Prop to support her Strength?—I will even venture to affirm, that, though NONE of the *four* GOSPELS had been transmitted to our Times, if cotemporary AUTHORS of FIDELITY and JUDGEMENT had given their Testimony to the LEADING ARTICLES of CHRISTIANITY, such as the LIFE and DEATH of JESUS, a general Account of the PURPOSES of his MISSION, and a Summary of what he DID and PREACHED; all INTEL- LIGENT and REASONABLE MEN, considering the disconsolate and uncertain Condition of the human Race, the great Dignity and Importance of these Truths, and their Consonance to our natural and most improved Apprehensions of the SUPREME BEING, would have perceived an IRRESISTIBLE

INDUCEMENT to acquiesce in the CHRISTIAN SCHEME, even THUS attested*.—But it must not be imagined that I mean by *this* to infer the *Inutility* of the GOSPELS: this would be a very unjustifiable and malicious Insinuation. They are indeed an INVALUABLE TREASURE; and the Preservation of them, without *material* Injury or Adulteration, through the long Night of Literature, amidst the Vicissitudes of human Affairs, and the Desolations of such miserable Times, as succeeded, during many Centuries, the Promulgation of Christianity, is a Subject of equal Gratitude and Exultation. But, I think I may reasonably infer from this Remark, that it is *superfluous* to

* NEQUE enim—stare sine assertoribus non potest—religio Christiana: aut eo esse comprobabitur vera, si adstipulatores habuerit plurimos, et auctoritatem ab hominibus sumpserit. Suis illa contenta est viribus, et veritatis propriæ fundaminibus nititur, nec spoliatur vi suâ, etiam si nullum habeat vindicem.

ARNOB. adv. GENT. L. III. sub initio.
attribute

attribute the *Gift of Inspiration* to the
EVANGELISTS.

4. THIS DOCTRINE INVALIDATES the
AUTHORITY of the GOSPELS, as SE-
PARATE and INDEPENDENT TESTI-
MONIES. For if the Minds of the
EVANGELISTS were EQUALLY illu-
minated by an Influx of Light, derived
from the SAME HEAVENLY SOURCE,
and displaying to their View in similar
Colours every Object of Contemplation,
their UNITED ATTESTATIONS can only
be equivalent in Value to the Deposi-
tion of a SINGLE WITNESS.

5. IT countenances a Charge of
COMBINATION and IMPOSTURE, and
reduces the Defenders of it to a painful
Dilemma.

THERE are undoubtedly *Variations*
in the Gospel Histories: this will be
universally acknowledged. If these
Variations

Variations cannot be adjusted, so as to constitute *one uniform and connected Story*, but appear to be MANIFEST REPUGNANCES, we cannot possibly admit the INFALLIBILITY of the Writers of *such Histories*.

IF these *Variations* may easily be reconciled, and cleared from all Shew of *Contradiction*, we can never hope to prevail upon inquisitive Men to embrace such a gratuitous and embarrassing *Hypothesis* as that of *Inspiration*, and must acquiesce in their Allegations of FRAUD, CONCERT, or IMITATION. No Arguments from *those Books* whose Pretensions are under Discussion, will be accepted as legitimate: and REASON and PROBABILITY are on the *other Side*.—In this Argument, I take it for granted to be *improbable*, that FOUR Historians, without communicating with each other, can write FOUR separate and circumstantial Accounts of
a Series

a Series of extraordinary Events, from different Sources of Intelligence, without any Variation.

BUT, on the contrary, if we discard this *inconvenient* and *vain Supposition*, and deduce the Authenticity of the GOSPELS from rational and solid Premises, the *Variations*, which occur in them, will become no inconsiderable *Presumption* of VERACITY and FAITHFULNESS. *Artful Copyists* are anxious to transfer a perfect Resemblance, and to preserve an unexceptionable Consistency even in the MINUTEST POINTS. But little Disagreements and Contradictions, that are the natural Consequences of human Frailty, of different Apprehensions, of dissimilar Modes and even Prejudices of Education, of Opportunities more or less advantageous for discovering the Truth, and of a thousand inconceivable incidental Circumstances, operating on the Mind with

with imperceptible Influence; these are such Intimations of ARTLESS CONDUCT and UPRIGHT INTENTION*, as must render the Credibility of *such Writers* UNIMPEACHABLE and BEYOND SUSPICION. It is not necessary for me to enlarge upon *this* Topic; which has been frequently illustrated by abler Pens than mine.

6. Is it *conformable* to those Sketches of the Œconomy of PROVIDENCE discernible in the MOSAIC System, but more eminently conspicuous in the Conduct of the CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION, to propagate a STANDING MIRACLE, as it were, through EVERY AGE of Man? The OMNIPOTENT RULER of the UNIVERSE never interrupted the regular Course of his Ad-

* Πίενομεν δὲ ταῖς προαἰρεσεσι τῶν γραφάντων τὰ εὐαγγέλια, κατατοχαζόμενοι τῆς εὐλαβείας αὐτῶν καὶ τῆ συνειδότῃ, ἐμφαινόμενων τοῖς γραμμασι, ὅδε (lege ὅδε) νόδον καὶ κνέντινον καὶ πεπλάσμενον καὶ πανήργον ἐχόντων—κ. τ. λ.

ORIG. *contra* Cels. L. III. P. 134, Ed. Cant.
ministration,

ministration, but on the most important Emergencies, and for the Accomplishment of wise and salutary Purposes. Nor, even on THESE OCCASIONS, did HE display the Wonders of his Power with a LAVISH PROFUSION, but, if I may be allowed the Expression, with a PARSIMONIOUS LIBERALITY. These miraculous Interferences were employed to ascertain the heavenly Designation of our LORD and his Apostles, and to rouse the Attention of Mankind to that glorious Scheme of Revelation, which *he* was commissioned to PROCLAIM and RATIFY, and *they* to VINDICATE and PREACH. But when this *preparatory Process* was completed, no *further* supernatural Intervention appears to have been either wanting or vouchsafed, in a single Instance, after the Death of the APOSTLES and their Contemporaries. CHRISTIANITY might then securely trust her Claims to a FAIR and SUITABLE REPRESENTATION of these stupendous Facts, and to the UNPER-
VERTED

VERTED SENSE of MAN. The EVANGELISTS, however *unlearned* they might be, seem to have possessed Qualifications competent to the Transmission of what they had *seen* or *heard*, to future Ages: and Posterity, in the Examination of their Histories, would have sufficient Scope, if MIRACLES were SUSPENDED, for the Exercise of their MORAL POWERS, and for the Display of some of the most transcendant VIRTUES, with which CHRISTIANITY can adorn the Hearts of Men; HUMILITY, and ZEAL, and HOPE, and FAITH: an End, which we may easily suppose the great AUTHOR of our Religion, from the Uniformity of his Conduct in this Respect, *might* have in View. *Thomas*, said HE to the incredulous Apostle, with some Mixture of Reproof, BECAUSE *thou hast SEEN me*, THOU *hast believed*: HAPPY ARE THEY*, *who have NOT SEEN, and YET have believed* †!

* μακαριοι.

† John xx. 29.

SECTION VIII.

The TRUE STATE of the Case exhibited.

NON CONSUETUDO hic MULTITUDOQUE AUCTORUM spectanda est, sed VERITAS. CONSUETUDO enim SINE VERITATE nihil aliud quàm VETUSTAS ERRORIS est, ERRANTIUMQUE NUMERO MALE DEFENDITUR.

MASCLEF's Heb. Gram.

WITH Respect to the *two Apostolical* EVANGELISTS, JOHN and MATTHEW, I apprehend the true State of the Case to be *this*.

ON the first Summons from our LORD to relinquish their Occupations and to attend his Person, they obeyed the peremptory Call without Reluctance or Delay: not, as it should seem, from any *irrational and involuntary Impulse*, but from

96 AN ESSAY ON

from Motives of FIRM, if not DELIBERATE, CONVICTION: won over, in all Probability, either by the WISDOM and AUTHORITY of CHRIST'S Discourses, or the signal MANIFESTATIONS of DIVINE POWER*, which HE displayed before them. Their implicit Obedience was an indisputable Proof of an INGENUOUS and TEACHABLE DISPOSITION, aspiring after Truth, and ready to embrace every Opportunity of Information and Improvement. But hereditary Prejudice and extreme Bigotry, characteristic of the *Jewish* Nation, were closely interwoven with all their Sentiments and Affections. They were as yet absolute Strangers to the CHARACTER of their MASTER and to the GENIUS of that Dispensation, which HE was delegated to disclose, and establish among Men. Nor does HE appear to have been solicitous to give them *at first* a clear Knowledge of *his*

* Luke v. 1—12.

own Purposes, and the Nature of *their*
 Designation. A full Explanation of
 his Office, and the *Spirituality* of his
 Religion, of the approaching ABOLI-
 TION of the *Mosaic Ritual*, and the
 DESTRUCTION of the *Temple* with all
 the Solemnities of their Worship,
 which they regarded with so much
 Reverence, as of UNCHANGEABLE In-
 stitution and ETERNAL Obligation;
 a Fore-knowledge of the Destination of
 himself, the GREAT MESSIAH, to the
 Afflictions of Humanity in every Form,
 and above all, to the ignominious and
 accursed Death of a MALEFACTOR on
 a Tree; a Prospect of their own future
 Condition, of the Calamities and Dan-
 gers which awaited them in the Pro-
 fession and Propagation of the GOSPEL
 through the World; the Necessity of
 imposing a perpetual Restraint on the
 Solicitations of Sense and Passion, of
 relinquishing the most tender and inno-
 cent Attachments of Friendship and

Confanguinity, and even the unblameable Propensities of human Nature, for the LOVE of TRUTH; of exchanging the Joys and Comforts of this Life for the bitter Cup of inexhaustible Sorrow and untimely Death:—such unexpected, such unwelcome, such incomprehensible Intelligence, would have given too violent a Shock to their Prejudices and Feelings, nor could have failed to be a very hazardous Trial of Fortitude and Fidelity more determined than their's.

If indeed such a Mode of Conduct had been agreeable to the WILL, and consistent with the VIEWS of PROVIDENCE, an immediate Infusion of Light and Strength from above, might have adjusted the Matter at once without further Trouble, by effecting a radical Extirpation of their Errors, by expanding their Hearts to a Size adequate to the Comprehension of these momentous

mentous Truths, and by supplying a Portion of Intrepidity and Patience, sufficient to encounter every Difficulty that might occur in the Profession and Vindication of them. But neither is this the ORDINARY PROCEDURE of UNERRING WISDOM, nor a Conduct adapted to the Exigencies of a Being placed in a State of DEPENDENCE and PROBATION. It is no trivial Recommendation of the Excellence of CHRISTIANITY, to have effected by GRADUAL APPROACHES such a signal Triumph over the combined Powers of HABIT and INCLINATION: nor is it *unreasonable* to conclude, that JESUS CHRIST, the WISDOM of God, might have this Purpose under Contemplation, and intend to demonstrate by this conspicuous Example, the ENERGY of CHRISTIAN TRUTH; a Purpose, which SUPERNATURAL and COMPULSIVE CONVICTION must of Necessity have PRECLUDED. Our LORD invariably

appealed, in all his public Addreffes and private Discourse, to the genuine FEELINGS of the uncorrupted Heart, and gave full Liberty and Employment to every Faculty and Disposition of the Soul. He neither *wished* nor *attempted* to FORCE into Belief that stubborn Prejudice and untoward Pride, which, the more they are solicited, set themselves the more in Opposition to the TRUTH. His CONSTANT ADDRESS to his Audience corresponded to the UNIFORM TENOUR of his ACTIONS: WHOSO HATH EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR!

DURING his Ministration, in the Flesh, HE gradually unfolded himself to his Disciples, and particularly to the *twelve*, in Proportion to the Strength of their Capacities, from Time to Time; and was continually preparing their Minds, by *oblique* and *incidental* Instruction, for an unreserved Communi-
cation

cation of the new and sublime Doctrines of the GOSPEL. The MOST HIGH is pleased on many Occasions to magnify the GLORIES of his WISDOM and POWER by the Imbecillity of the Instruments employed in the Execution of his Will. A Stream of Light is more splendid and distinct in the Midst of surrounding Darkness. In Conformity to this Constitution of the divine Government, the APOSTLES appear to have been Men of no extraordinary Capacities, of few, and those moderate, Acquirements; and on this Account, the more pertinacious of their national and religious Peculiarities. With a candid Simplicity, which, perhaps, has no Parallel in the Annals of Mankind, they bear frequent Testimony to their own Dullness of Apprehension and incurable Perversity; Defects, for which they are so constantly reproved and so repeatedly instructed by their BENEVOLENT and PATIENT

MASTER. But all his REITERATED DECLARATIONS, and the clear Notices he had given, on various Occasions, of his approaching Sufferings and Death; nay, even that EMBLEMATICAL SOLEMNITY, prefigurative of the breaking of his Body and the shedding of his Blood, operated with so little Efficacy on their Affections, that immediately after the Celebration of this moving Ceremony, with a STUPID OB DURACY, bordering upon INFATUATION, they were still anticipating the Joys of Pre-eminence in an earthly Kingdom, and were canvassing with a MEAN and FRIVOLOUS AMBITION, their Pretensions to superior Distinction *on the right Hand, and on the left* of the Throne of their DYING REDEEMER*. Nor could that LAST SCENE of ANGUISH, which removed the EXPECTED DELIVERER of ISRAEL from his TERRESTRIAL EXISTENCE, nor the addi-

* Luke xxi. 24.

tional

tional Information which HE gave them in several personal Appearances among them after his RESURRECTION, *entirely* dispel the gross Cloud of Prejudice that involved their Understandings. *Lord*, said they, in the fond Language of Aspiration after WORLDLY GREATNESS; *Lord*, wilt thou restore AT THIS TIME *the KINGDOM to Israel**?

IT is most evident, that a Set of Men labouring under the Influence of *such* Passions and Misconceptions, could not be, in their *present State* of Temper and Apprehension, proper Instruments for the Conversion of a dissolute and idolatrous Generation to a Religion of HUMILITY, LOVE, and PEACE, either by their PREACHING or their EXAMPLE. The relinquishing of every valuable Enjoyment, of every pleasing Prospect in this sublunary Scene, and a patient Endurance of Poverty, Re-

* Acts i. 3.

proach, and Affliction in the saddest Forms and in Instances the most trying to human Feelings, for the distant Expectation of future Happiness in Reversion, was an Alternative but ill-suited to their visionary Projects of terrestrial Ambition. Nothing but the Irradiations of the ILLUMINATING SPIRIT of GOD could purify and invigorate such obstructed and unstable Minds. For *this* Purpose, and for the more effectual Promulgation of the GOSPEL, they were instructed, by an express Promise, to expect the Illapse of that HEAVENLY VISITANT: a Promise, which received it's full Accomplishment on the Day of *Pentecost*. Under the Operation of this animating Power, which the Occasion so loudly demanded, they perceived within themselves a Degree of Confidence and Conviction, of Understanding and Intrepidity, unknown before. The great Gifts with which they were endowed, the astonishing Miracles which

which they were enabled to perform, and a conscious Sense of the Energy and Superintendence of the heavenly Advocate*, inspired them with such Zeal, Alacrity, and Fortitude, as led them to address in public the Multitudes of *Jerusalem*, and to hold out, as the promised and expected MESSIAH, that JESUS of *Nazareth*, whom they, and their Priests and Rulers, had so lately accused, as a CRIMINAL, to the *Roman* Governor, and had seen EXPIRING on a Cross.

SUCH were the Offices of that HOLY SPIRIT †, which CHRIST sent down from *his Father and their Father, from his*
God

* παρακλητῆς.

† PROPTEREA PARACLETUM miserit Dominus, ut quoniam humana mediocritas omnia SEMEL capere non poterat, PAULATIM dirigeretur, et ordinaretur, et ad perfectum perduceretur disciplinâ, ab illo VICARIO DOMINI Spiritu Sancto.—Quæ est ergo PARACLETI administratio nisi hæc, quod disciplina dirigitur, quod scripturæ

God and their God; to WORK MIRACLES, to STRENGTHEN their RESOLUTION, to ENLARGE their IDEAS, and to call to their Remembrance the Things which they had been told before. But in EVERY OTHER RESPECT†, and on every Occasion when the Interests of CHRISTIANITY did not immediately interfere, the APOSTLES were frail and fallible, like ordinary Men, resigned to the Guidance of their own uninfluenced Judgement; as is sufficiently clear, without circumstantial Proof, from the Acts and other Parts of the NEW TESTAMENT.*

scripturæ revelantur, quod intellectus reformatur, quod ad meliora proficitur? NIHIL SINE ÆTATE, et omnia TEMPUS expectant.

TERTULL. de Virg. vel. 1.

* John xiv. 26.

† SINCE the writing of the above, I perceive that the excellent DR. WATSON has made some similar Reflections in the second Letter of his APOLOGY for CHRISTIANITY.

NOR

NOR was this Agency of the SPIRIT of GOD upon their Minds of such Efficacy, I apprehend, as to superinduce an UNIVERSAL and UNLIMITED ACQUAINTANCE with religious and moral Truths in all their Connections and Dependencies. It were sufficient, if HE communicated such a Portion of Information, as would satisfy the peculiar Exigencies of the various Situations in which they might be called upon to act or suffer. However, it is MOST CERTAIN, that after no inconsiderable Alteration had been effected in their general Conduct, as *Preachers* of the GOSPEL, we may observe in some of them a *Narrowness of Thought**, and a *prudential temporising Circumspection*, or rather a Degree of *Hypocrisy*†, very unworthy of the APOSTLES of JESUS CHRIST: which manifestly shews, that whatever Changes had been wrought

* Gal. ii. 14—21. † συνεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ. V. 13.

in them, as *Ministers* of the Word, they were still beset with the Passions and Infirmities of *Men*. Nor shall I be afraid of advancing it as my Opinion, that MANY CHRISTIANS in succeeding Ages have been possessed of Dispositions MORE BENEVOLENT and GOD-LIKE, of Understandings MORE LIBERAL and ENLIGHTENED, and have walked, in all Respects, MORE *worthy of their Vocation*, than MOST of the TWELVE APOSTLES.

Now an Author of Integrity and good Sense, who sets himself to compose a History of some distant Period, takes Care to collect his Materials from the most undoubted Records and the most authentic Information. If he design to exhibit merely a Detail of such Transactions as have fallen under his own immediate Notice, he relates them without Exaggeration or Disguise, to the best of his Judgement and Recollection; and is particularly cautious

tious in *either* Case, to advance Nothing as Fact, without substantial Evidence. An *Eye-witness*, who proceeds with such Circumspection, without intermixing his own private *Opinions* with his Narrative, is no more liable to Deception than his *external Senses*: one, who relates upon the Credit of another's Information, *must* be exposed to *Error* and *Mistake*.

WE may easily perceive the Aspect, which these Observations have on the Histories composed by the EVANGELISTS. MATTHEW and JOHN, by Reason of their constant Attendance upon the Person of our LORD almost from the Commencement of his Ministry, were, in Point of *Information*, perfectly qualified to record those Scenes, in which they had been conversant, and had acted so conspicuous a Part. This Task they executed in the most satisfactory and proper Manner. They delivered,

livered, not a visionary System of ingenious Conjecture, no intricate and refined Theories, but a simple Narrative, in a familiar and inartificial Style, without rhetorical Embellishment, without Digressions, without Argumentation, without Inferences, without Remarks: but with every *internal* Character of CREDIBILITY. The most inattentive Survey of these singular Histories must lead us to acknowledge *the Wisdom of God** in the Appointment of *such* Instruments for this Work, and in condescending to consult the Necessities of the unlearned and far greater Portion of Mankind.

* πτωχοι ευαγγελιζονται. Matt. xi. 5.

Ωσπερ ἡμεῖς τοῖς κομιδῇ νηπιοῖς, & τῶν ἑαυτῶν ἐν τῷ λεγεῖν σοχαζομεθα δυνατῶ, ἀλλ' ἀρμοζομενοι πρὸς τὸ ἀσθενεῖς τῶν ὑποκειμενων, φαμεν ταυτα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ποιῶμεν, ἃ φαίνεται ἡμῖν χρησιμα εἰς τὴν τῶν παιδῶν, ὡς παιδῶν, ἐπιστροφὴν καὶ διορθωσιν· ἕτως εοικεν ὁ τῶν Θεῶν λογὸς ὡκονομηκεναι τὰ ἀναγεγραμμενα, μετρησας τὴν δυνάμει τῶν ἀκροντων, καὶ τῷ πρὸς αὐτῶν χρησιμῶ, τὸ ἐν τῇ ἐπαγγελίᾳ πρεπον.

ORIG. cont. Cels. L. IV. P. 210. Ed. Cant.

But

But we cannot conceive any Form of History, or any Kind of Composition, that would require *less* Ability and Ingenuity, than those in which they have executed their Gospels. These Compositions are altogether such as we should have previously expected from the Authors of them, considering the Meanness of their Occupations, the Mediocrity of their Acquirements, and their Sphere of Life. They were not unconscious, we may presume, of their unimproved Understandings and their numerous Infirmities, both as *Men* and *Writers*. They wisely forbore expatiating beyond the proper Limits. They adhered to *ocular Proof*, or the most unsuspected Information*. They consulted the UTILITY of *others*

* APOSTOLOS DOMINI habemus auctores, qui nec ipsi quicquam EX SUO ARBITRIO, quod inducerent, elegerunt, sed acceptam a CHRISTO disciplinam FIDELITER nationibus assignaverunt.

TERTULL, de PRÆS. Hæret. 6.

more

more than *their own* FAME, and would not hazard an Intermixture of their private OPINIONS, PREJUDICES, and PRECONCEPTIONS, with the TRUTH.

IF MARK composed his GOSPEL under the *Eye* and by the *Direction* of ST. PETER, *his* Authority is in all Respects equivalent to that of an APOSTOLICAL EVANGELIST.

LUKE wrote, as we may infer from the Tenour of his Introduction and his Silence with Regard to any other Source of Knowledge, from the *Testimony* of others. This necessarily compels us (as before observed) to make some Deductions from the Credibility of *his* GOSPEL, as *Testimony* is weakened by Transmission in a regular Proportion to the Number of successive Relators. But some may think, that his Inferiority in this Particular, is partly compensated by those Indications of
superior

superior Abilities and Discernment, which they have descried in the Texture of his History. And indeed on this Account, and because of the many beautiful Parables and other important Relations with which this Gospel is enriched*, and it's peculiar Adaptation to the Circumstances of the *Gentiles*, which is conducted throughout with exact Attention and singular Ingenuity; it is, perhaps, as valuable to *us* as any of the *four*.

AND here we might not improperly terminate our Disquisitions, having taken sufficient Scope for the Contemplation of this Subject, in endeavouring to prove that the Doctrine of a PLENARY and INFALLIBLE INSPIRATION, attending and controlling

* PLURIMA enim et MAGIS NECESSARIA EVANGELII per hunc (*Lucam*) cognovimus, &c.

IREN. adv. Hær. III. 14. quem vide.

the EVANGELISTS in every CONJUNCTURE of their LIVES, and *particularly* in the COMPOSITION of the GOSPELS, is a FACTITIOUS and UNWARRANTABLE ASSUMPTION; as such a Gift appears to be UNNECESSARY*, INEXPEDIENT and IMPROBABLE†, DISCLAIMED by the EVANGELISTS THEMSELVES‡, INCONSISTENT with a COMPARATIVE VIEW of the GOSPELS||, and INJURIOUS to the INTERESTS of the CHRISTIAN REVELATION§. But as the *Epistles* of ST. PAUL compose a large and important Part of the received Canon of the NEW TESTAMENT, and as the Singularity of his Case may be thought an invincible Objection to the preceding Conclusions, it may be of Service to enter into a distinct and careful Consideration of *his* CHARACTER and PRETENSIONS.

* Sect. III. † IV. ‡ V. || VI. § VII.

S E C -

SECTION IX.

*The Character and Pretensions of ST. PAUL
considered.*

ΙΔΟΥ, Ο ΠΑΙΣ ΜΟΥ, ΟΝ ΗΡΕΙΤΣΑ· Ο
ΑΓΑΠΗΤΟΣ ΜΟΥ, ΕΙΣ ΟΝ ΕΥΔΟΚΗΣΕΝ Η
ΨΥΧΗ ΜΟΥ· ΘΗΣΩ ΤΟ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΜΟΥ ΕΠ'
ΑΤΤΟΝ, ΚΑΙ ΚΡΙΣΙΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΕΘΝΕΣΙΝ ΑΠΑΓ-
ΓΕΛΕΙ.

Matt. xii. 18.

WE shall coincide, I presume,
with the Suffrages of all rea-
sonable and candid Judges, when we
pronounce PAUL to have been a Man
of a vigorous and well-informed Un-
derstanding. He had, in all Proba-
bility, made a very considerable Pro-
ficiency in *Jewish* Learning, under the
Tuition of his eminent Preceptor*;

* Acts v. 34. xxii. 3.

and his Writings, few and unostentatious as they are, betray an Elegance of Taste, which had indulged itself in occasional Excursions into the Walks of *Grecian* Literature. We may suppose him, with Reason, to have been unacquainted with the Doctrines of CHRISTIANITY before his Conversion, except from the partial Misrepresentations of common Fame among his Countrymen. His original Acquaintance, therefore, with the true Character of JESUS CHRIST, and with the Genius of the GOSPEL, was, doubtless, the sole Result of SUPERNATURAL COMMUNICATION. But his intimate Knowledge of the Scriptures of the OLD TESTAMENT and of the Evidences of *Judaism*, seconded by his inquisitive Disposition, and illustrated by the Light of *Gentile* Literature, would be of material Service to him, after his Mind was purified, and his Temper had received a right Direction,

by

INSPIRATION. 117

by the Superinduction of CHRISTIANITY.

LET us then examine what Authority his Writings carry with them; and whether he asserts to himself more than *human* Credibility. We will first consider some particular Passages of his *Epistles*, which have been thought to vindicate the GIFT of INSPIRATION to *all* the *canonical* Books both of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT.

But continue thou in the Things which thou learnedst and wast assured of, considering of whom thou learnedst them;

And that from a Child thou hast known the HOLY SCRIPTURES, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith in CHRIST JESUS.

Every Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine,

118 AN ESSAY ON

for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness,

That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good Work.*

I. I OBSERVE, that these *holy Scriptures*, with which Timothy had been conversant from his *Infancy*, could not be any Writings of the *New Testament*, as the Publication of none of *them* has been fixed by *any* sacred Chronologer at so early a Period†. The Expression, therefore, must be restrained to *some* Writings of the *Old Testament*.

THIS single Remark might suffice for the present Purpose; but it may not be amiss to add

* 2 Tim. iii. 14, 15, 16, 17.

† SEE ACTS xvi. 1. If Timothy was only *twenty* Years old then, which is a very fair Supposition, he must have been born about the Time of our SAVIOUR'S Crucifixion.

2. FOR

2. FOR THIS REASON, the Phrase *Which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith* IN CHRIST JESUS—must mean, “Which can give thee such Information as will lead thee unto just Apprehensions of the Salvation proclaimed by the Gospel; a Salvation not to be attained but by the Mean of Faith in CHRIST JESUS.”

3. AND what are those Writings of the OLD TESTAMENT, which are worthy of this Distinction, and are so *peculiarly* calculated to communicate just Conceptions of the saving Dispensation of CHRISTIANITY? The PROPHECIES, undoubtedly, lay Claim to this CHARACTERISTICAL PRE-EMINENCE. THEY inculcate more spiritualised and sublime Ideas of the SUPREME BEING, of his Nature, his Government, and his Perfections, than most other Books of the *Jewish* Scriptures. They insist with the greatest

Earnestness and Freedom, on the *Insufficiency* and *Unimportance* of *external* Discriminations, and *ceremonial* Devotion, unsanctified by active Piety, Integrity of Conduct, and Purity of Heart. They foretel in more explicit Terms a future and better Dispensation *in Spirit and in Truth*, and delineate with unambiguous and even circumstantial Exactness, the Life and Fortunes of it's commissioned Establisher, the MESSIAH. They give, in short, *some Intimations* of a future Period of Retribution to the whole Race of Man according to their Works, and of a more exalted Sphere of Existence after the Termination of this mortal Life. Stupendous Truths! not at all delivered, or but ænigmatically adumbrated, in the *Pentateuch*, and the *historical* Parts of the OLD TESTAMENT.

4. WHETHER we read with some Interpreters, *All Scripture, divinely inspired,*

*spired, is also useful**—or with others, *All Scripture is divinely inspired, and is useful*—will be immaterial; since the Context leads us, in *either Case*, to understand the Expression, as particularly respecting the *prophetical Books of the OLD TESTAMENT*.

WITH *this* Passage, therefore, the }
EVANGELISTS and APOSTOLIC WRI-
TERS have no Concern.

Now we have not received the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the Things that are freely given unto us by God:

Which Things we also speak, not in Words taught by human Wisdom, but in

* THIS Translation is preferable. Some Mss. have *ἐστὶ καὶ ὠφέλιμη*: and where *γραφήν* means *the sacred Scriptures*, the Article is ALWAYS prefixed, except some Word in the Connection determines the Sense; as in Rom. i. 2. xvi. 26.

Words taught by the Holy Spirit, comparing spiritual Things with spiritual.*

THAT the APOSTLE in this Passage modestly speaks of *himself* in the *plural Number*, is very evident from the Beginning of the Chapter. He is arguing in Vindication of the simple unaffected Language, in which he delivered the Doctrines of the GOSPEL, purposely avoiding the rhetorical and studied Embellishments of human Eloquence. As if he had said:

“ I HAVE in no Respect adjusted my Manner of Preaching to the artificial and ostentatious Practices of the Orators of this World. I have a more im-

* 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13. It is not easy to ascertain the Meaning of the last Clause, *comparing spiritual Things with spiritual*—in this Connection. Perhaps 1 Cor. xiv. 29. considered with 1 John iv. 1. may contribute to explain it.

portant

portant Purpose in View, than the Propagation of my own Fame, as a Man of Eloquence; even the Demonstration and the Establishment of the TRUTH of GOD. My Acquaintance with the great Articles of the Christian Faith, I received by immediate Revelation from JESUS CHRIST himself. These I communicate to you; not in Words of human Wisdom, but in the plain Form suggested to me by the HOLY SPIRIT."

To *these* we might add *other* Texts of a similar Import*: but we should not be authorised to extend any Conclusions deduced from *them* beyond *himself* and *his Epistles*: and the large Concessions which we are going to make, upon solid Grounds, in Favour of this CHIEF APOSTLE, render a minute Examination of any Text that relates to *him*, entirely superfluous.

* As Gal. i. 12. &c.

PAUL

PAUL received his Designation to the Apostolate through the Medium of a most miraculous Interposition, and for the Execution of a Commission the most important, since the Ministration of JESUS CHRIST, that had been, or could be, entrusted to the Care of Man. In the Midst of a furious and an unrelenting Career of Persecution, whilst he was breathing Murder and Devastation against the Infant-Church, and had armed his impetuous Zeal with an authoritative Mandate from the High-Priest to crush it, if possible, at it's Birth; he was instantaneously arrested by a Beam of heavenly Light, which shone around him with an Effulgence vivid as the Lightning*. He fell to the Ground, fightless and dismayed, and found himself addressed by a Voice from Heaven, expostulating with him upon the Motives of his implacable Animosity against the Dis-

* *νεπινσπαλειν*. Acts ix. 3.

ciples of the LORD. Full of Trepidation and Perplexity, and abashed by the plain, but unanswerable, Question of the much injured JESUS, he rose up to obey the Dictates of the heavenly Vision; and became henceforward a renowned Champion of that Faith which he had once laid waste; and at length, after a most prosperous and painful Warfare, witnessed the Sincerity of his Conversion, and washed away the Stains of former Guilt with the Stream of his own Blood.

WE clearly perceive that, in this Instance, the ALMIGHTY DIRECTOR of the UNIVERSE overstept the stated Limits of his Administration, and in the Conversion of this *chosen Vessel**, exerted, if we may be pardoned the Expression, an EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT of OMNIPOTENCE. We might previously have inferred from this striking

* *ο θευ* *εγκοιτης*. Acts ix. 15.

Trans-

Transaction, that God had in View the Accomplishment of some Purpose of more than ordinary Use and DIGNITY: and the Fact corresponds to such a reasonable Inference. This EMINENT PERSON, of an enthusiastic Temper, an enterprising Spirit, and of a persevering and unshaken Fortitude, was invested with a Commission that scandalised every *Jew*, and confounded the Ideas even of the APOSTLES themselves. He was authorised, not only to proselyte the *idolatrous Gentiles* to the Christian Faith, but to admit them, without *Circumcision* or *Obedience* to the *Mosaic Ritual*, to all the Privileges and to the perfect Liberty of the GOSPEL, upon equal Terms with the *Jews*; who fondly imagined the COMMON PARENT and PRESERVER of MEN to be their APPROPRIATED GOD and FATHER.

WHAT Activity and Firmness of Mind were requisite for this arduous Under-

Undertaking! What Dangers would he encounter, what Odium would he incur, what Persecution would he suffer, from the virulent Zeal of his Countrymen, in the Avowal of a Doctrine so incompatible with their Prejudices, and subversive of ceremonial Institutions, to which they chiefly owed their Discrimination as the People of God and ascribed the very Essence of Piety and Religion! Must we not suppose that he was furnished with the most extraordinary Gifts for the Discharge of such an arduous and weighty Office? Could any Thing less than the PERPETUAL INVIGORATION of spiritual Strength, sustain the Infirmary of Man, in the Multiplicity of pressing Emergencies to which the APOSTLE of the GENTILES was exposed! Emergencies, sufficient to overwhelm the Spirit and exhaust the Patience of human Nature.

WE

WE will briefly examine this Matter, and see what Qualifications *he* arrogates to *himself*; only premising, that his disinterested Conduct on all Occasions, the Magnanimity with which he endured not only Afflictions, but the severer Trial of Reproach and Scorn, rather than let go his Integrity; his humiliating Acknowledgement of his ferocious and sanguinary Zeal for *Judaism*, and the ingenuous Freedom with which he asserts his Sincerity as a CHRISTIAN and his Services as an APOSTLE, (a sure Pledge of conscious Merit!) are undoubted *Presumptions* in his Favour, and discountenance all Suspicion of Stratagem and Imposture.

HE speaks of his Knowledge of the TRUTHS of CHRISTIANITY*, not as derived from the slow Process of gradual Instruction or diligent Enquiry;

* Gal. i. 12.

not as collected from the Information of the APOSTLES or any other Men, but as originating immediately from the Fountain-head, JESUS CHRIST himself. He had no Communication, and probably not even a personal Acquaintance, with the other APOSTLES*, until he had been engaged *several Years* in the Duties of his Ministry: and at last he had an Interview with the Principal of them, merely to preclude their Opposition to his Preaching†, and by those Means prevent the Obstruction of the GOSPEL—to inform *them* of his Appointment to the APOSTLESHIP, not to instruct *himself* in the Doctrines of the CHRISTIAN REVELATION. From this circumstantial Detail of his first Proceedings after his Call, given by himself, he, doubtless, means us to understand, that his Authority and Injunctions are equivalent to those of

* Gal. i. 21—24.

† C. ii. V. 2.

his LORD and MASTER, who had APPOINTED and INSTRUCTED him.

BUT it is by no Means NECESSARY, or even REASONABLE, to suppose, that this Energy of the Spirit operated with EQUAL and UNCEASING INFLUENCE, and took up, as it were, a CONSTANT RESIDENCE in his Mind. JESUS CHRIST seems to be the only Man on whom THE ALMIGHTY poured down his Spirit *without Measure**. And our APOSTLE appears to have been favoured with various *occasional* Revelations†, adapted to the various Exigencies of his Ministry; and these Interferences were superfluous, if the Operation of the Spirit was UNIFORM and PERPETUAL. And he sometimes enforces his Injunctions with expressly asserting, that he had received such Information from

* John iii. 34. † See Acts xxii. 17. xvi. 9.
1 Cor. xi. 23. 2 Cor. xii. 2. Gal. ii. 2. 1 Theff.
iv. 15. &c.

INSPIRATION. 131

the LORD JESUS; and never mentions, as I recollect, that the in-dwelling Spirit suggests it to his Mind at *that particular Time*, which he would naturally have done, had *this* actually been the Case. Besides, he *submits* some Propositions to the Judgement of those to whom he writes, to be adopted, or disregarded, at their Discretion; and does not peremptorily *enjoin* them, as UNQUESTIONABLY TRUE and of INDISPENSABLE OBLIGATION.

It is plain also, that in some Points, less essential, it is likely, to the Business of his Mission, God did not think it proper to satisfy him, and to solve his Doubts; but left him in Uncertainty, to the solitary Use of his own Judgement. Accordingly we find from his History in the *Acts*, and even from his own Epistles, that he was not exempted from the Frailties and Imperfections of Mortality. But (for which he can

never be enough commended) whenever he advances his *private unauthorised* Opinion, he speaks in Terms of MODESTY and even DIFFIDENCE; so that it is easy for us to collect from his MANNER of EXPRESSION whether he is dictating *his own Sentiments*, or a *revealed Truth**. Nor indeed was he likely, for several Reasons, to impose any Injunction as obligatory, from *his own unsupported Persuasion* of it's Propriety. He gloried in his Gospel, as the direct GIFT of HEAVEN: he appears to hold intellectual Excellence in but little Estimation; when contrasted with moral Worth; and depreciates his own Endowments in particular, with unusual Earnestness, and with Symptoms of deep Humility.

* 1 COR. vi. 10. vii. 12, 25, 26. x. 15.

DICIT et Apostolus, *Si quid ignoratis; Deus vobis revelabit: solitus et ipse CONSILIUM subministrare, cum PRÆCEPTUM DOMINI non habebat.*

TERTULL. de Coron: 4.

HE

INSPIRATION. 133

HE was a Person of a very liberal and elevated Soul: a jealous Assertor of the Rights and Dignity of Man, and may not improperly be styled the GREAT PATRIOT of the GOSPEL. This Excellency of Spirit, most observable in his Life and Writings, would naturally render him averse to the Imposition of any Restraint, or the Proposal of any Article of Faith, when he had not the most satisfactory Assurance both of it's Truth and Fitness.

THE Result of these several Considerations is, in my Judgement, that when ST. PAUL speaks and directs in HIS OWN APOSTOLICAL CHARACTER, his Word is of the HIGHEST POSSIBLE AUTHORITY, and is impressed with more Marks of CREDIBILITY and of a DIVINE ORIGIN, than ANY OTHER WRITINGS of the NEW TESTAMENT: and that his *Epistles*, as far as they have been transmitted to us *entire* and

K 3

uncorrupted,

uncorrupted, contain TRUTH, EVANGELICAL TRUTH, WITHOUT any MIXTURE of ERROR.

BUT FACTS are of more Importance in authenticating the CHRISTIAN REVELATION, than ARGUMENTS and OPINIONS, though advanced by APOSTLES themselves: and the contracted Plan of *epistolary* Writings, and their unavoidable Defects, arising from our Ignorance of the complicated Circumstances under which they might be composed, and from many other Particulars, render the *Gospel Histories*, which exhibit the LIFE of JESUS, as they are a more EXACT and COPIOUS Delineation of CHRISTIANITY, a MORE SECURE and ELIGIBLE RULE of CONDUCT.

TO make one general Inference deducible from the Positions of the preceding

ceding Essay, which is earnestly submitted to the Consideration of those whom it more immediately respects.

IF EVANGELISTS and APOSTLES, in the PRIMITIVE DAYS of Christianity, were not INSPIRED by the SPIRIT of GOD in the Manner that has been generally imagined: no MAN or SET of MEN, will be supposed by REASONABLE People, to be favoured with this EMINENT PRIVILEGE in these LATER TIMES. THEREFORE, those Societies of Christians, who *think* themselves to be actuated by the HOLY SPIRIT on various Occasions, and particularly during the Celebration of the public Services of Devotion, though their Sincerity and Conscientiousness are unquestionable, MUST of Course, in this Respect, labour under the Influence of FANCY and SELF-DELUSION.

I HAVE not been induced to make the preceding Remark from any Motive of Malignity and Uncharitableness, or from a disparaging Opinion of those to whom it may be applicable; but, because a particular Set of Protestants, who have arisen amongst us and have been unhappily discriminated by a Name of Derision and Contempt, which I, who cannot either ridicule or despise the sincere and virtuous, dislike to mention, has placed so great Confidence in the illuminating Influence of the HOLY SPIRIT and their internal *Feelings*, as to neglect too much the *Letter* of the SACRED WRITINGS, and the Assistances of ancient Literature. They have regarded the one, as of secondary Use in the Business of religious Faith; and appear to have no Conception, how the Glimmer of the other can reflect any Light on the splendid Page of Revelation. From this Consideration I will be bold to say,

say, that no Denomination of Christians whatsoever can boast such a large Proportion of sensible, temperate, and virtuous Members, who hold so many unwarrantable and absurd Opinions; and who are, at the same Time, so slenderly acquainted with the Learning of Antiquity, and with the Genius and Doctrines of that Revelation, which they suppose themselves to profess in it's greatest Purity.

THUS, without Reserve, and, I am sure, without Partiality, have I declared my Thoughts very plainly and concisely*, upon this interesting Subject; and shall be happy, if those who may deign to read this *Essay*, will use the same Freedom with which I have

* Απλως ὁ μυθὸς της αληθειας εφν. EURIP.

both thought and written*. I wish, with the most ardent Aspirations, to see the Foundations of CHRISTIANITY entirely disencumbered of that Mass of Rubbish, which IGNORANCE, ARTIFICE, and SUPERSTITION have heaped upon them, and restored to their pristine State of APOSTOLICAL SIMPLICITY: nor shall my Exertions in this great Cause ever cease, but with the Suspension of my Faculties, or the Interruption of my Existence. An unreserved Exhibition of the TRUTH can never be injurious to the Interests of RELIGION†, unless indeed debased by
acrimo-

* ME dicente quod sentio, vos discernite et examine, si quid rectum est aut minus rectum.

ORIGEN, Hom. XXI. quoted by LARDNER in his *Credibility*.

† POOR SOZOMEN indeed, *honest* Man! had some conscientious Scruples of this Kind.

Τ' ἄλλα δὲ, διὰ εἰμῶ γενεσθαι ἐν ἀταξίᾳ τοσαυτῇ,
ΟΙ ΜΗΘΕΝΤΕΣ ἐκ ἀγνοουσι· ΕΓΩ ΔΕ ΑΝΑΓ-
ΚΑΙΩΣ

acrimonious Zeal and Malevolence of Spirit, or made at some very unseasonable Juncture; Allegations, that cannot be advanced, I hope, with any Plausibility against *this Essay*, and in *these* Times of Liberality and Moderation. Perhaps, however, we are too liberal in our Concessions, when we allow that there *may be* a Time improper for divulging TRUTH through the *Medium* of the *Press*. No Christian thinks the enforcing of *religious Duties* and the Reprobation of *vicious*

ΚΑΙΩΣ ΣΙΓΗΣΟΜΑΙ, μη και ΑΜΥΗΤΟΣ τις εντυχῇ τη γραφῇ.

Ecc. Hist. L. VIII. C. xxi.—No *unuseful* Distinction!

He might have borrowed the Hint from LUCIAN.

MEN. ΟΥΘΕΜΙΣ ΕΚΦΕΡΕΙΝ ΑΥΤΑ ΠΡΟΣ ΑΠΑΝΤΑΣ, ΕΔΕ ΤΑ ΑΠΟΡΡΗΤΑ ΕΞΑΓΟΡΕΥΕΙΝ, μη και τις ἡμᾶς γραφῇται γραφὴν ἀσεβείας.

ΦΙΛ. Μηδαμῶς, ὦ Μενίππε, πρὸς τὴ Διῶ, μη φθονήσης τῶν λόγων φίλῳ ἀνδρὶ· πρὸς γὰρ εἰδοτὰ σιωπᾶν εἶς, τὰ ἄλλα καὶ πρὸς μεμνημένον.

NECYOM.

Manners,

Manners, ever improper. This salutary Work is urged *in Season and out of Season*. And why should we be more indulgent to *intellectual Perversity*, than to *moral Depravation*—to the *Understanding*, than to the *Heart*?

EXCEPT we demolish some of those feeble Outworks, which the blind and timid Credulity of darker Ages assisted to erect for the Entrenchment of SUPERSTITION and ECCLESIASTICAL SUPREMACY, we shall be incapable of defending even the Citadel with any tolerable Prospect of Success. The unreflecting, who *cannot* discern, and the malicious, who *will not* distinguish, must of Course confound the Devices of IGNORANCE and POLICY, whilst they are avowed and defended, with the genuine Doctrines of the GOSPEL.

THE Notion of a *plenary Inspiration*, opposed in the preceding Pages, is one
of

of those MANY FANCIES that have impaired the Strength and tarnished the Beauty of our Religion; and has been a great Obstacle to a just Interpretation of the Scriptures, by conducing to extinguish the Light of Reason, that Candle of the LORD, *which illuminateth every Man who cometh into the World.* Some well-intentioned, but mistaken, Christians, from a servile Timidity and a precipitate Zeal, which under the Appearance of *doing Honour* to our Religion, in Reality *disgrace* it, invert the Order of Things, and frustrate the Gifts of PROVIDENCE. From a Persuasion of the *absolute Inspiration* of every Line and Word of the SACRED WRITINGS, they relinquish the Privilege of intelligent Creatures, and bend their Faculties to a Coincidence with the literal Positions of Scripture, however unintelligible, however subversive of the Rules of temperate Criticism and rational Interpretation, and however

ever inconsistent with the Context of the Passage, and with the Scope and Tenour of REVELATION. There are DUTIES to PRACTISE, there are PROPOSITIONS to BELIEVE, PREVIOUS and PREPARATORY to our Acquaintance with CHRISTIANITY, and INDEPENDENT on it*. But the Reason of these People

* THE learned ANSELM, Archbishop of *Canterbury*, in the *eleventh* Century, was of a very different Way of thinking, and as his Mode of *Investigation* is CURIOUS in itself, and seems to have been too generally adopted by all Ranks of Christians from that Age to the present, it may not be amiss to produce it, for the SATISFACTION and EDIFICATION of the Reader.

SICUT RECTUS ORDO exigit, *says this logical Prelate*, ut profunda FIDEI CHRISTIANÆ CREDAMUS, PRIUSQUAM ea præsumamus RATIONE DISCUTERE; ità negligentia mihi videtur, si, POSTQUAM CONFIRMATI SUMUS IN FIDE, non studemus, quod credimus, intelligere.

MOSH. Ecc. Hist. Cent. XI.

SEVERAL polemic THEOLOGIANs of this our Day might be pointed out, who appear to have *reasoned* like the good Archbishop: but if I might be permitted to interpose

People is not thought worthy of performing even the subordinate Office of a *Slave*. She is reluctantly borne away in Triumph, without a temporary Permission to advertise the Conqueror of his Frailty and Fallibility*. Unless FAITH, however, derive all it's Energy from a Subserviency to our REASONING

interpose my Opinion, I would fix upon two Publications lately voided, as entitled to an unquestionable Pre-eminence in this Respect, and written exactly after the Heart of our prelatical DIVINE :

THE REV. MR. JONES'S CATHOLIC DOCTRINE
of the TRINITY :

AND DR. BURGH'S SCRIPTURAL CONFUTATION :

MISERABLE Specimens indeed of the THEOLOGY
of the EIGHTEENTH Century, and the most contemptible of all possible Performances !

Qui BAVIUM non odit, amet tua carmina, MÆVI !

* ———— Prætorem in curribus altis
Extantem, et medio sublimem in pulvere Circi ;
————— et SIBI CONSUL
NE PLACEAT, curru SERVUS portatur eodem.

Juv. Sat. X. 36.

INTELLECT,

144 AN ESSAY ON, &c.

INTELLECT, PATIENTLY EXERCISED
and IMPARTIALLY EXERTED, OUR
ENQUIRIES will be UNFORTUNATE,
and not INNOCENT: they will neither
issue in the ADOPTION of VENIAL
ERROR, nor the PERCEPTION of UN-
MIXED TRUTH.

11 AP 66

T H E E N D.